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# Video Review

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ON HOME  
VIDEO

FEBRUARY 1989

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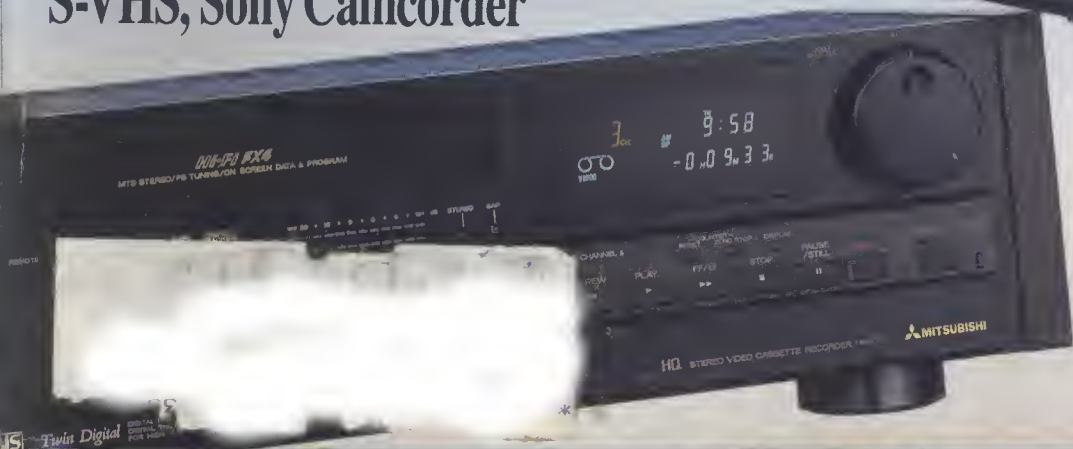
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LAB TESTS: Panasonic  
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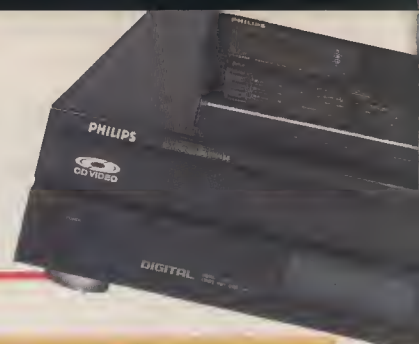
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Cover photo: Brian Kosoff



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## The Envelope Please

**T**elevision has the Emmys, the music business the Grammys, and the movie industry the Oscars. And on page 45 we announce the nominees for the 1989 ViRAs—or *Video Review Awards*—the annual accolades for programming excellence we've awarded since 1981.

And every year we're asked the same question: "What's the point of having video awards—aren't all those movies covered by the Oscars?"

The answer, of course, is that a movie isn't the same at home as in the

theater. The ViRA nominees are selected by our critics as the movies that succeed best as *video*. And just as video is a second chance for movies that didn't make it in the cruel theatrical marketplace, the ViRAs are a second chance to honor pictures, such as Spielberg's brilliant *Empire of the Sun*, that were snubbed by the Academy. Video also lets movies become something more than their big-screen versions, such as when long-lost scenes are restored to classic movies or when stills, interviews, scripts and other material are added (as is the case with

the new Criterion disc version of *2001*). And, finally, video is much more than movies: Music, documentary, how-to and fitness programs all have their own special categories.

The winners will be announced at a gala ceremony in Hollywood this March. In the meantime, congratulations to all the worthy contenders.

Speaking of worthy contenders, former *VR* assistant managing editor Douglas Brod has assumed a new role as *VR*'s managing editor. Doug's experience at the magazine stretches back four years, and he brings a valued measure of judgment, talent and humor to his new position. We'd also like to welcome John Quain to the staff as assistant managing editor.



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# Why you may miss the ski season.

- They're using a lawn mower to groom the slopes.
- Your dermatologist says you're allergic to spandex.
- Those binding safety releases work. While you're on the lift.
- Your outfit went out of style five minutes ago.
- A flower has been named after your skiing technique: "face plant."
- You're put on "standby" for a lift ticket.
- Your skis decide to go down the slope without you.
- You and your equipment have been labeled old and obsolete.
- "I thought *you* brought the chains."
- Every time you fall, someone yells "yard sale."
- Your poles "snap."  
Your skis "crack."  
And your buckles "pop."
- Binding releases, wouldn't.
- There are better skiing conditions in your freezer.



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# Why you don't have to.

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"Fire and Ice" has World Freestyle champion and James Bond stunt double John Eaves racing down slopes all over the world. Ski Magazine calls it "... the best skiing, or skiing acrobatics, you'll ever see."

And if you want to see breathtaking, daredevil skiing combined with an electrifying musical score—check out Bogner's "Snow Motion." You'll see the greatest acrobatic skiers in the world pull some incredible stunts. All filmed to pulsating music featuring Gary Wright and the Alan Parsons Project.

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VR



### E.T. Bruté?

*E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* was a long-awaited video release for my collection. Imagine my deep disappointment upon bringing two copies home only to see a very jittery picture. My VCR heads were in good shape, and I adjusted the heck out of my tracking control. Macrovision has struck again. I guess I'll have to make one more electronic addition to my video system.

Steve Clark  
Indianapolis, IN

Since I had not seen *E.T.* during its theatrical release, I was especially looking forward to its video debut. I usually only purchase classic prerecorded videocassettes, so this was a special purchase. I got ready for a special evening of watching this wonderful movie. Instead, I got Macrovision.

Steven Lianides  
W. Hartford, CT

### Blankety-Blanks

I believe that the reason Nippon's Jack Gluck can claim such a low return rate on his blank tapes ("Letters," Dec. '88 VR) is that they're sold for so little money that stores don't bother returning them; either the stores or the wholesalers "eat" them. The only other reason that he could make such a claim would be that the \$1.99 tapes are being played on \$199 VCRs and old, worn-out TVs. People don't complain because they can't tell good from bad.

Edward A. Oines  
Canton, SD



It isn't a plus for the industry when Nippon, the one tape manufacturer screaming "total lie," is itself the perpetrator of a clumsy attempt at fraud and deception by printing across the front of its videotape boxes the unbelievably stupid words "Stereo Videocassette." The box should read: "If you use this tape on a stereo VCR, put a stereo source into the VCR, play it back on a stereo VCR, chances are you will experience stereo sound."

If a manufacturer blatantly misleads on the outside of its product, one can't help but wonder what might be on the inside.

Bob Eckert  
Colorado Springs, CO

### Cable Cabal

When I finished reading "Workbench: The Cable Connection" in the Dec. '88 VR, I felt like someone had been looking over my shoulder.

I have the same problems with my cable company and have completed, with excellent results, the same procedures Marc Wielage outlined in the column.

Bill Elmendorf  
Lebanon, IL

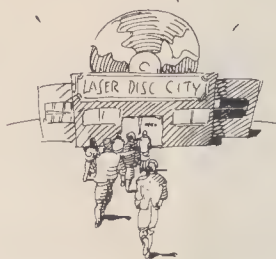
"Workbench: The Cable Connection" was right on target. I have all of the same complaints about my cable system; however, the author did include one inaccuracy. In his section on eliminating ground-loop hum, he describes building a "dual-in-line transformer" out of two baluns. This is not a transformer and does nothing to isolate the ground connections, because a balun, regardless of price, is not an isolation transformer. All a balun does is convert impedance from one value to another.

John Lofgren  
Milwaukee, WI

• *Marc Wielage replies: Mr. Lofgren is entitled to his opinion, but for the purpose I discussed, "a transformer is a transformer is a transformer," regardless of whether or not it is specifically called an "isolation" transformer. There is no direct electrical connection between the source on one side of the transformer and the load on the other, so it does, in fact, effectively isolate the two. Try it, it works.*

### The Lowdown on Laser

I enjoyed Steve Simels' article on the renewed popularity of laser videodiscs



*Selected correspondence addressed to Video Review, 902 Broadway, New York, NY 10010, is printed in the "Letters" section. VR reserves the right to edit and condense selections for publication. Sorry, no personal replies.*

("Laser Discs: Video's 10-Year Overnight Sensation," Nov. '88 VR). To make the laser format a mass-market item, more needs to be done. For instance, the laser video companies should publicize its advantages to retail dealers and consumers. And being able to rent, not only buy, laser discs is very important.

Manufacturers should concentrate on building low-cost players that can compete with low-end VCRs. This will put players in the hands of a lot more people.

Raymond J. Moran  
Fords, NJ

### Scrambled Channels

The January *Video Review* contained an article briefly explaining the audio and video advantages enjoyed by satellite-TV owners. Unfortunately, the number of subscription channels currently available through General Instrument's VideoCipher II descrambler was grossly understated. Home satellite consumers have access to over 100 channels in the clear and over 40 subscription services available through the VideoCipher II descrambler. Virtually 100% of the subscription programming offered to the US satellite-TV market is encrypted using the de facto VideoCipher II technology.

Michael Meltzer  
Vice President, Sales and Marketing  
VideoCipher Division  
General Instrument  
San Diego, CA

• *Actually, the misprint occurred in an advertising supplement, not in a VR article, but we regret the error nonetheless. For our latest editorial update on the satellite-TV scrambling situation, see page 18.*

### Correction

In the Test Report for the Tatung 2020-CPX monitor/receiver in the Dec. '88 issue, we erroneously reported that the set is not equipped with an S-connector. It is.

Does the date Jan. 31, 1989, ring a bell? It should. It's the deadline for entries in The Great *Video Review* Shootoff. See the Dec. '88 and Jan. '89 issues for complete details on how you can win an A/V system worth over \$5,000. (And, by the way, we haven't yet received many entries in the F/X category.)





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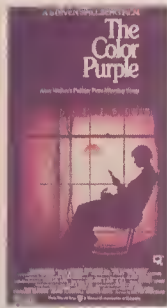
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		THE GODFATHER PART II	0018592	LA BAMBÀ	1963032	STAR TREK III—THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK	2016322	THE DEER HUNTER	2124152
		TOP GUN	4269322	HELLO AGAIN	5487012	ROOSTER COGBURN	1018242	CRIMES OF THE HEART	5153042
		STAR TREK IV—THE VOYAGE HOME	4306112	NATIONAL LAMPOON'S VACATION	6039442	THE MORNING AFTER	5152052	RICHARD PRYOR LIVE ON THE SUNSET STRIP	1603092
		BEVERLY HILLS COP	2053362	LEGAL EAGLES	2102032	A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS	0553352	THE MOSQUITO COAST	6294022
		STARK TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE	2035212	THE EMERALD FOREST	3145592	SUPERMAN III	6040742	HOLIDAY INN	1035152
		BACK TO THE FUTURE	2114172	BLAME IT ON RIO	7141132	THREE AMIGOS	6523052	RE-ANIMATOR	4847172
		THE GODFATHER	0008512	THE WAY WE WERE	1529262	A VIEW TO A KILL	0989392	THE BOYS IN COMPANY C *	1522072
		THE PRINCESS BRIDE	1250052	MISSING IN ACTION	2624022	FRIENDLY PERSUASION	0960162	TIGHTROPE	6051392
		WALL STREET	3661042	PORKY'S REVENGE	0993172	SHENANDOAH	1019232	THE STEPFATHER	1229032
BLUE HAWAII	0673302	THE JOLSON STORY	1849032	A PASSAGE TO INDIA *	1741362	RADIO DAYS	6521072	THE SEVEN SAMURAI	3108392
HANNAH AND HER SISTERS	6517112	OVER THE TOP	6298082	WHITE NIGHTS	1814382	POLICE ACADEMY	6049672	EXTREME PREJUDICE	7957162
TRADING PLACES	2017232	THE GUNS OF NAVARONE	1523222	SILKWOOD *	3106152	THE SEARCHERS	6102202	NAOMIE	3650072
MURPHY'S ROMANCE	1853482	YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN	0635452	CHINATOWN	2025232	GARDENS OF STONE	3646042	MAD MAX BEYOND THE THUNDERDOME	6089272
THUNDERBALL	0709462	STRIPE	1513242	BLADE RUNNER	3104332	CHINA GIRL	4957052	SWEET CHARITY	2181072
THE KILLING FIELDS	6084222	A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET	3288232	THE KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN	3187332	PALE RIDER	6097272	SUDDEN IMPACT	6146282
LESS THAN ZERO	3655022	OR... NO	0654182	ALEXANDER THE GREAT	2762042	THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL	3225292	GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?	1819092
MAURICE	5185062	REAR WINDOW	2134132	THE ROAD WARRIOR	6028392	A STAR IS BORN (1954)	6105012	PRETTY IN PINK	4224282
BACK TO SCHOOL	6524202	PRIZZI'S HONOR	4802282	GOING MY WAY	1025092	NAPOLEON	2127042		
PROJECT X	3636062	THE GOONIES	6081252	BONNIE & CLYDE	6072182	NORTH BY NORTHWEST	2509362		
GUY AND DOLLS	3535592	THE THIN MAN	2640022						
A CHORUS LINE	3193432	HOPE AND GLORY	1251042						
THE MISSION	6303012	THE CARE BEARS MOVIE II	1862132						
BELIEVERS	6554152	THE CAT IN THE HAT: OR: SEUSS ON THE LOOSE	7303092						
JAGGED EDGE	1813542	FORT APACHE, THE BRONX	4818382						
THE GRAPES OF WRATH	0531702	LOST HORIZON	1916012						
FROM HERE TO ETERNITY	1917002	AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON	7140142						
THE COTTON CLUB	3100292	THE BOAT (DAS BOOT)	1520252						
BLIND DATE	1953132	THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN	0698152						
FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE	0690132	BLUE VELVET	5150072						
GIGI	2508112	DUO VADIS	2681022						
WHOOP! GOLDBERG	4815152	HAWAII	0661342						
THE HANOI HILTON	6307072	SUPERMAN II	6015182						
CRITICAL CONDITION	4309182	RUNNING SCARED	2758002						
HALLWEEN	3250432	AGNES OF GOD *	1812222						
JAWS: THE REVENGE	2230082	BIG JAKE	0971212						
THE SHINING	6103292								
RAISING ARIZONA	3634082								
WAR OF THE WORLDS	2094292								
KELLY'S HEROES	2871122								



BEVERLY HILLS COP II  
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THE UNTOUCHABLES  
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## WESTERN/ACTION ADVENTURE

SCARFACE (1983)	2168042
BRADDDCK	
MISSING IN ACTION III	7250022
RAMBO III	7975062
FULL METAL JACKET	6325052
LETHAL WEAPON	6308222
RBDODP	2350022
PREDATOR	3649012
ACTION JACKSON	5191082
SHANE	2073162



SILVERADO  
1810242

THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER	0788082	THE BOY WHO COULD FLY	5146042	THE VELVETEN RABBIT	7900662
G.I. BLUES	0670332	52 PICK UP	3423032	THE BISHOP'S WIFE	3160262
PORKY'S	0756062	SOUL MAN	5600032	THE FALCON & THE SNOWMAN	4808222
THE MIRACLE WORKER	2753052	MAD MAX	7109472	RUNAWAY TRAIN	2757012
FATAL BEAUTY	2785072	ROCKY	0563332	DEATH WISH 4: THE CRACKDOWN	3449032
FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF	4273102	HAMBURGER HILL	4954082	JUMPIN' JACK FLASH	3627072
WEST SIDE STORY	0505912	THE MUSIC MAN	6147012		
		GANDHI *	1533042		

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P13/P15/P61



*Kris Kristofferson, Lesley Ann Warren and Willie: writers of the song.*

#### **Songwriter**

I'm stationed in West Germany and have been trying to locate the movie *Songwriter* on video. Can you help?

Terry L. Barton Sr.  
Stuttgart, W. Germany

Here's music to your ears. This 1984 Alan Rudolph (*The Moderns*) movie, starring Willie Nelson, is available on tape from RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video. We see that your Army post office box is in New York, so perhaps you can make arrangements with one of two New York distributors to get a copy of the cassette. The companies are Artec, at (800) 451-5160, and Commtron, at (800) 621-1333.

#### **Distant Drums**

I'm looking for a movie on video-cassette called *Distant Drums*, starring Gary Cooper.

John Davis  
Newark, NJ

Cooper wades through the Florida Everglades in this 1951 movie directed by Raoul Walsh, but you needn't go to that much trouble to procure a copy. The nearest outlet to you that should have the \$59.95 tape is Star Video in Jersey City, (201) 333-4600. If they can't provide you with the tape, contact Republic Pictures Home Video, 12636 Beatrice St., Los Angeles, CA 90066, (213) 306-4040.

#### **Xanadu**

I have been looking for a VHS copy of *Xanadu*, starring Gene Kelly, Olivia Newton-John and Michael Beck. Can you help?

Thomas Welch  
Jacksonville, FL

You might remember this one for the Electric Light Orchestra's title track, the hit "Magic" and the special appearance by the Tubes. It's available on MCA Home Video and can be ordered through your local retailer. If you still have trouble, contact the MCA distributor in Florida at (301) 992-0786.

#### **Bill and Coo**

Where can I find a VHS tape of *Bill and Coo*? It's a full-length feature made by Ken Murray—with a complete cast of birds.

Anita Dykstra  
St. Anne, IL

This 1947 movie received an honorary Academy Award for "artistry and patience" (as you can well imagine). It's

*As a service to our readers, Video Review will help track down hard-to-find tapes or discs. Send requests to Video Review's Video Hunter, 902 Broadway, New York, NY 10010. VR reserves the right to edit and condense selections for publication. Sorry, no personal replies.*

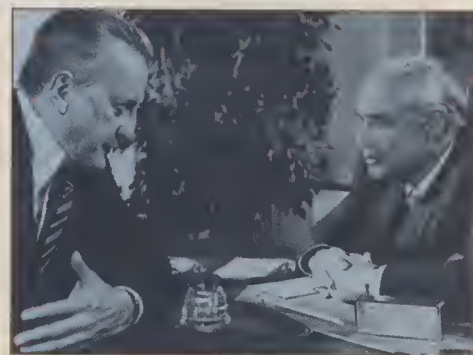
currently available from Video Yesteryear, (800) 243-0987, for \$24.95.

#### **Journey to the Center of the Earth**

Over the years, I've looked for two movies, *Journey to the Center of the Earth* with Pat Boone, and *Ulysses* with Kirk Douglas, but to no avail. Could you help me locate them?

Pat Ullrich  
Arcade, NY

Well, we had to dig deep, but we did come up with one. *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, starring the unlikely duo of James Mason and Pat Boone, is available from Playhouse Video for \$19.99. Ask your local video shop to special-order a copy for you. As for *Ulysses* (that's Homer, not Joyce), at one time it was handled by Warner Home Video, so you might still find the movie on cassette. The rights have since reverted back to producer Dino De Laurentiis, and the movie is currently unavailable.



*Scott and Brando discuss The Formula.*

#### **The Formula**

I would like to know if *The Formula*, a movie based on the book by Steve Shagan, has been released on videotape.

John Collier  
Ukiah, CA

This topical 1980 movie from MGM starred Marlon Brando and George C. Scott in a plot culled from the dark days of the energy crisis (the title refers to a formula to replace oil). MGM/UA Home Video did have the movie out on videocassette, but has since placed it on moratorium. Until the tape is rereleased, you might check with retail outlets stocking older cassettes.



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—Dennis Daniel, DEEP RED MAGAZINE

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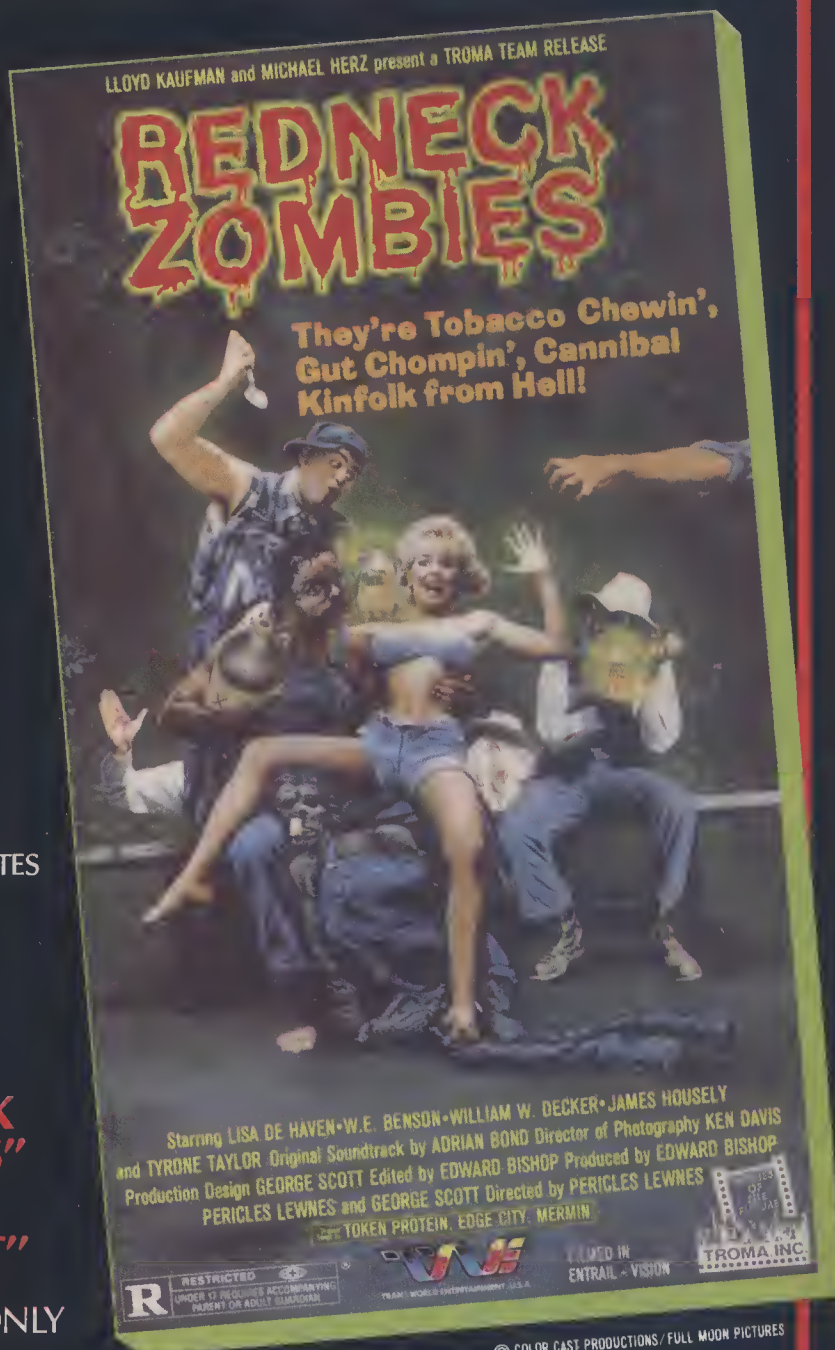
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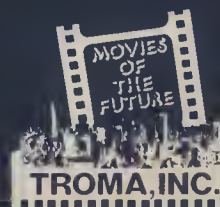
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# FREEZE FRAMES

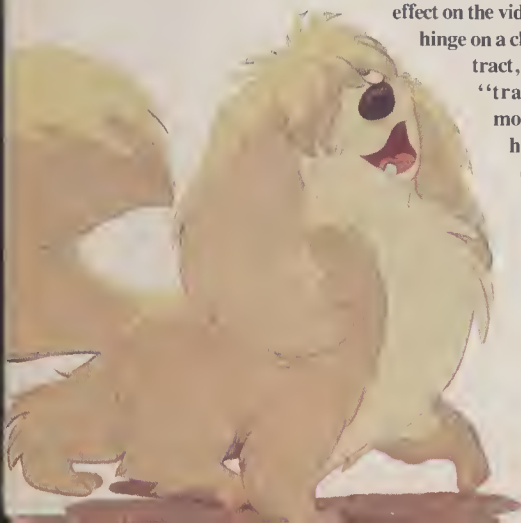
## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**"Videocassettes did exist  
[in 1950].  
I have eight of them,  
and guess who's  
singing on them?"**

This seeming rewrite of home video history, courtesy of songstress Peggy Lee, is not as unlikely as it sounds. Lee made this remark to the *New York Post* in reference to her \$25-million lawsuit against Walt Disney Productions for producing and marketing the video version of *Lady and the Tramp* without her permission. Lee co-wrote the songs and supplied a number of the voices (including that of Peg, pictured, who performs the memorable "He's a Tramp"), so she figures she deserves more than the 500 smackers she says she was offered to do promotion for the release. The "videocassettes" Lee refers to were Panoram Soundies, primitive precursors of today's video jukeboxes. If you guessed that it was Lee singing on them, you're right.

Should Lee's case go to trial (there's always the chance of an out-of-court settlement) the eventual ruling could have a profound effect on the video business. Lee's claims

hinge on a clause in her original contract, which stipulates that no "transcriptions" of the movie can be made without her permission. The question being taken to the law is: Does a videocassette version of a movie constitute a transcription? Stay tuned.



If that bastion of journalistic accuracy known as *The Sun* is correct, we'll have to add a new video measurement to our camcorder tests: ghost retention. According to the weekly tabloid, an ordinary Ouija-board session was transformed into an other-worldly experience with the help of home video. While friends and family played around with the Ouija board, host Del Muire used his camcorder to tape the action. On playback, the tape showed emissaries from the great beyond observing the revels. According to witness Maurice Grayson, "I

remember calling up my Auntie Beatrice. I was laughing about the whole thing, as were the others. But looking at the tape, there was my aunt...floating above my head with a look on her face like she used to have when I was a child."

Since *The Sun* is a supermarket paper, it left out some critical information for would-be Ouija tapers. What was the camcorder format? Was Muire using high-grade tape? Super VHS? What about the high-speed shutter? Our Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory is looking into it.



## DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL— WE MEAN IT

The acronym-mania of home video manufacturers has borne some strange fruit in the past, and continues to do so. *Par exemple*: While we techno-nerds know the letters MTS stand for multichannel television sound, reader Claude Parent of Quebec points out that French Canadians looking at the same set of letters recognize it as *maladies transmises sexuellement*—sexually transmitted diseases. So if you happen to run across any stats that say stereo-TV sales in French Canada are weak, well, now you know why.



You talking to me? Well, what's my motivation? **Robert De Niro** is stepping behind the lens to direct a New York-based thriller called *Double Bang*. The Intense One also stars. Will De Niro the director take well to De Niro the painstaking performer?

**Jack Nicholson** has directed himself before, and if *Goin' South* proved anything, it's that he's no **Roman Polanski**. Still, he'll be directing the long-awaited sequel to Polanski's *Chinatown*, called *The Two Jakes*. As you may recall, *Jakes* was originally to co-star big-time producer **Robert Evans**. Of course, Nicholson does have an inside track on *Chinatown*'s Jake character, since he had that part in the 1974 original.

Imagine, if you will: **Kiefer Sutherland** is rockabilly legend **Eddie Cochran** in a movie bio produced by Brat Pack icon **Rob Lowe**! Or if that doesn't grab you, how about **William Hurt** as off-kilter Beach Boy **Brian Wilson** and **Richard Dreyfuss**



about to portray musicians, it seems only fitting to report that **David Johanssen**, known to *Saturday Night Live* and MTV viewers as **Buster Poindexter** (we remember him when he was wearing tutus with the New York Dolls) is making something of a splash on the silver screen, what with featured roles in *Scrooged* and the Richard Dreyfuss starrer *Let It Ride* (not adapted from the Bachman-Turner Overdrive hit). David plays a cabbie in both flicks.

Finally, we're pleased to report the return of that incredible Pygmalion-Galatea team, **John and Bo Derek** (pictured). Not since the collaboration of **Jean-Luc Godard** and **Anna Karina** has the screen seen more galvanizing...no, wait, who are we kidding? All anyone

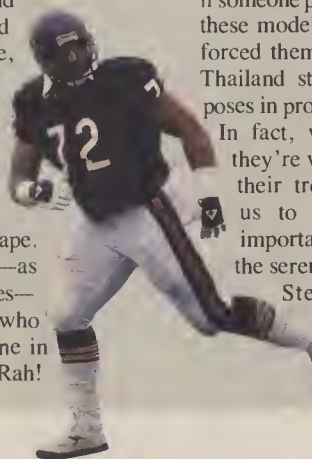
# Zoom

By Laurie Werner

as his 24-hour shrink and  
wants to know is if Bo will  
undress for the couple's next  
effort, a comedy called *Ghosts*  
: **Landy?** These are real projects, folks, in real "development." Watch for 'em!  
: *Don't Do It*. We don't know, but we do know that **Donald Trump** is in the pic, playing a tycoon named Mr. Spectacular.  
: Since we seem to have a plethora of non-tuneful types

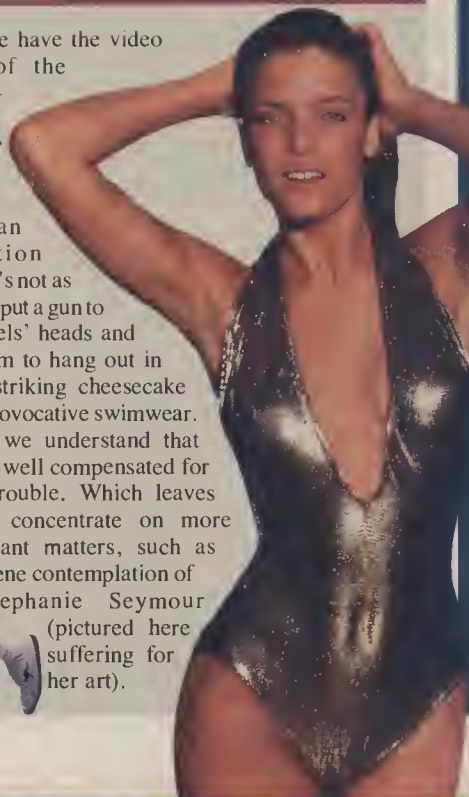
## THE WIDE WORLD OF CORPOREALITY

It was William Shakespeare, or perhaps Amber Lynn, who wrote, "What a piece of work is man," and two recently released tapes do quite a job of showing just *what* a piece of work man (in the generic sense) is. *Strange But True Body Shapes* (Fox Hills) is a catalog of diverse physical specimens who've managed to make their peculiarities work for them on the football field. The short and the tall, the squat and the lean and, of course, the outright obese (such as Chicago Bear William "The Refrigerator" Perry, pictured) are all represented. Not that this is an exploitation tape. No, it's inspirational—as its press release gushes—"a tribute to the men who proved that heroes come in all shapes and sizes." Rah!



Next, we have the video version of the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* (HBO). This is an exploitation tape, but it's not as if someone put a gun to these models' heads and forced them to hang out in Thailand striking cheesecake poses in provocative swimwear.

In fact, we understand that they're well compensated for their trouble. Which leaves us to concentrate on more important matters, such as the serene contemplation of **Stephanie Seymour** (pictured here suffering for her art).



## LAZY, LAZIER, LAZIEST

Face facts: Bringing your camcorder on vacation can be a righteous drag. Say you're tooling around some exotic locale and the only footage you manage to get is of the locals trying to sell you their relatives. Or maybe you spend so much time shooting that you end up coming home as frazzled as when you left.

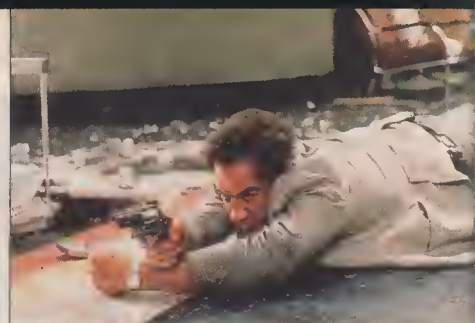
DVP Inc., the self-proclaimed "pioneer in camcorder software," has a solution. Actually, three different solutions. Its video postcards/albums have been developed to suit the semi-avid shooter, as well as types who can't be bothered. Take the *Hawaii Remembered* series: For the vacationer who likes to shoot a lot, there's a 60-minute tape with a pre-shot five-minute highlights introduction (said highlights being stuff you might miss on your own—volcanoes by night, hula dancing, papaya barbecues and so on). Then there's the 10-minute tape with the pre-shot 1½-minute intro (we assume this short version deletes the papaya barbecue). Finally, for those who forget to bring their camcorders, there's a 15-minute tape of entirely pre-shot footage.

Nifty idea, huh? And what a great opportunity to confuse your friends. Why, you could order the 60-minute *Hawaii Remembered* tape and fill up its remaining 55 minutes with footage of downtown Weehawken: "Well, you know, that hula stuff aside, the islands aren't all they're cracked up to be. I'd stay home if I were you." (DVP Inc., P.O. Box 338, Cold Spring, NY 10516; 21411 Hwy. 18, Apple Valley, CA 92307)





# HIT LIST



This Month	TOP TAPES	Last Month
1	<b>E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL</b> Henry Thomas, Drew Barrymore; MCA, \$24.95	1
2	<b>CINDERELLA</b> Animated feature; Walt Disney, \$29.95	2
3	<b>THREE MEN AND A BABY</b> Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg; RCA/Columbia, \$89.95	3
4	<b>WILLOW</b> Val Kilmer, Billy Barty; RCA/Columbia, \$89.95	4
5	<b>RED HEAT</b> Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jim Belushi; IVE, \$89.95	—
6	<b>ABOVE THE LAW</b> Steven Seagal; Warner, \$89.95	—
7	<b>BEETLEJUICE</b> Michael Keaton, Geena Davis; Warner, \$89.95	5
8	<b>A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 4</b> Robert Englund; Media, \$89.95	—
9	<b>BILOXI BLUES</b> Matthew Broderick, Christopher Walken, MCA, \$89.95	—
10	<b>FUNNY FARM</b> Chevy Chase, Madolyn Smith; Warner, \$89.95	—

This Month	TOP DISCS	Last Month
1	<b>E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL</b> Henry Thomas, Drew Barrymore; MCA LV, \$39.98	—
2	<b>BEETLEJUICE</b> Michael Keaton, Geena Davis; Warner LV, \$24.98	1
3	<b>CINDERELLA</b> Animated feature; Walt Disney LV, \$29.95; CAV, \$39.95	2
4	<b>ABOVE THE LAW</b> Steven Seagal; Warner LV, \$24.98	—
5	<b>FULL METAL JACKET</b> Matthew Modine, Adam Baldwin; Warner LV, \$24.98	3
6	<b>BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED</b> Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy; MCA LV, \$34.98	4
7	<b>FRANTIC</b> Harrison Ford; Warner LV, \$24.98	—
8	<b>MOONSTRUCK</b> Cher, Nicolas Cage; MGM/UA LV, \$34.95	6
9	<b>FATAL ATTRACTION</b> Michael Douglas, Glenn Close; Paramount LV, \$34.95	7
10	<b>PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES</b> Steve Martin, John Candy; Paramount LV, \$34.95	—

"Hot Hits" are based on a nationwide survey of leading video software specialty stores, chains, mass merchandisers and wholesalers. The lists include titles culled from retailers' current top tape and disc lists as well as distributors' prerelease sales printouts.

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# NEWSBREAKS

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## F.Y.I.

### BYE, BYE AKAI

CITING THE HIGH VALUE of the yen against the dollar, Akai has pulled the plug on its US distribution. Although a relatively small manufacturer, Akai had been known here as a pioneer in both audio and video technology.

### TRY, TRY AGAIN

NBC, WHICH LOST MONEY on its broadcast of the '88 Summer Olympics, is the surprise winner of the US television rights to the '92 games in Barcelona. The network will pay over \$400 million, substantially more than the tab for Seoul.

### PARAMOUNT NIXES LIST

PARAMOUNT HOME VIDEO has decided to release without suggested list prices all of its future videocassettes intended for the rental market, including its next four big titles: *The Presidio*, *Fucker*, *"Crocodile" Dundee II* and *Coming to America*. Consumers will still be able to buy the cassettes but at prices to be determined by individual stores.

### SUPER SETS

SHARP CLAIMS TWO NEW 31 inch TV sets now on sale in Japan offer 750 lines of resolution in addition to built-in Dolby Pro Logic Surround and 60-watt audio amplifiers. The models list there for over \$2,500.

### KID-VID BILL BUMPED

BACKERS OF A BILL TO limit the amount of advertising on children's TV shows have vowed to reintroduce the measure following former President Reagan's surprise pocket veto late last year. Reagan opposed the widely supported bill on First Amendment grounds.

### MAXELL SHOWS HDTV

KYOTO, JAPAN—MAXELL recently showed reporters here a prototype HDTV videocassette that uses half-inch, metal-evaporated tape in a housing that's about 1/3 larger than a VHS cassette. Hitachi/Maxell will commence experimental HDTV broadcasts with Japanese national broadcasting company NHK in the early '90s.



The Last Emperor reigns on S-VHS via Hitachi and Orion pact.

## SUPER FLICKS

### More S-VHS Movies on Way

By Glenn Kenny

A new crack in the S-VHS software dam is being hammered at by Hitachi and Orion Home Video. Anyone who buys a Hitachi S-VHS VCR or camcorder between now and June 30 will be able to purchase as many as 39 S-VHS movies from Orion.

A sheet enclosed in the packaging for Hitachi's S-VHS products lists 39 titles ranging from *Jean de Florette* and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* to *The Couch Trip* and *Coffy*. Big hits from Orion-owned Nelson Entertainment are also included—among them, *The Princess Bride* and *The Last Emperor*. Orion is also offering a number of *Jazz in America* titles, highlighting the likes of Dizzy Gillespie and Max Roach. *RoboCop*, which was offered to purchasers of the Mitsubishi HS-423UR S-VHS deck, is also listed.

An Orion spokesperson said that the tapes will be made to order and duplicated using the same masters as the VHS ver-

sions. Orion still has no immediate plans to market S-VHS software to the general public.

## MOONWALKING

### Jackson Pic On Video Only

By Richard Huff

*Moonwalker*, Michael Jackson's new full-length feature movie, won't be seen in theaters in this country. Instead, it will go straight to video. The singer's 94-minute extravaganza was slated for a January release on CBS Music Video and will carry a \$24.98 retail price tag.

*Moonwalker*, a movie anthology with performance segments and fantasy-adventure sequences, has six musical numbers, including a 41-minute version of "Smooth Criminal," of which a shortened cut was at presstime in heavy rotation on MTV. In addition, there is a montage of the singer-songwriter-dancer's 24-year career.

## CAR VIDEO

### MOBILE LCD TV BOWS

By Gregory P. Fagan

Hitachi, with an eye toward futuristic automotive on-board navigation systems, recently introduced a five-inch color LCD TV for cars in Japan.

The 27-ounce set mounts anywhere in the vehicle and includes A/V inputs for connecting external video sources. A diversity tuning system selects the best signal source from four separate antenna elements, and channel selections can be made via an infrared remote control.

"Dashboard video" may sound like an insurance company's nightmare, but Hitachi



On the move: Hitachi TV.

foresees no such problem for its tiny TV. The company's car audio and video Formula includes an interlock feature that automatically blackens the screen when the car is started. Installers can override the interlock for rear seat use.

The display has 115,200 pixels (picture elements) and provides 480 lines of horizontal resolution, according to Hitachi.

Hitachi has no firm plans to introduce the product in the US, according to a company spokesperson.



The video you've  
been dreaming about.



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25th Anniversary Swimsuit

**SAMPLE**  
**SWEEPSTAKES**

**INSTANT WINNER CARD**

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9.

HBO  
VIDEO

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# NEWSBREAKS

NBC'S TV OLYMPICS... DIGITAL VCR

AUTO TV SET... HIGH-DEF STUDY

## F.Y.I.

### BYE, BYE AKAI

CITING THE HIGH VALUE of the yen against the dollar, Akai has pulled the plug on its US distribution. Although a relatively small manufacturer, Akai had been known here as a pioneer in both audio and video technology.

### TRY, TRY AGAIN

NBC, WHICH LOST MONEY on its broadcast of the '88 Summer Olympics, is the surprise winner of the US television rights to the '92 games in Barcelona. The network will pay over \$400 million, substantially more than the tab for Seoul.

### PARAMOUNT NIXES LIST

PARAMOUNT HOME VIDEO has decided to release without suggested list prices all of its future videocassettes intended for the rental market, including its next four big titles: *The Presidio*, *Fucker*, *"Crocodile" Dundee II* and *Coming to America*. Consumers will still be able to buy the cassettes but at prices to be determined by individual stores.

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*Jackson Pic*

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"Dashboard video" may sound like an insurance company's nightmare, but Hitachi



## Sports Illustrated 25th Anniversary Swimsuit Sweepstakes Instant Winner Card

Every card features one of the following prizes:

- A 1989 Dodge Spirit!
- A trip to one of the exotic locations featured in this year's Swimsuit Issue!
- A Sports Illustrated "Get the Feeling" video!
- 3 free issues of Sports Illustrated or a \$2.00 rebate on any Sports Illustrated "Get the Feeling" video!



The video you've  
been dreaming about.



**Sports  
Illustrated**

VIDEOS

Superstar models come to life as you see the making of the 25th Anniversary Swimsuit Issue. This exciting video brings together some of the world's most beautiful women and exotic locations. Now you don't have to dream anymore.

Available where you buy videos. Only \$19.99.



**HBO  
VIDEO**

© 1989 VIDEO 1989

## UNSCRAMBLING SATELLITE TELEVISION



IRDs, such as Drake's ESR2024, may have new competition.

While Congress, major electronics companies and scientists battle over the future of HDTV (high-definition television) on the front pages, several satellite-TV developments, which eventually may prove crucial to advanced TV, have passed all but unnoticed on the back pages.

Although quiet and fairly stable since its nearly disastrous contraction several years ago, the satellite industry could be ready for a new set of quakes in the coming year.

General Instrument's (GI) VideoCipher II (VC II), the system used to scramble satellite signals for subscription-only use, will explore a technological upgrade this year in a move that could invite congressional scrutiny. Another proposed satellite scrambling system could offer both confusion and new options to dish owners. And, as the light over HDTV heats up, satellite TV is looking increasingly attractive as a way to deliver tomorrow's television to quality-conscious viewers. Here's a brief rundown on the satellite scene:

**VideoCipher II-Plus:** The VC II scrambling/descrambling technology became the industry standard soon after its introduction in 1985. It allows the DBS (direct broadcast satellite) Center in San Diego, California, to authorize each addressable receiver to receive scrambled programs (see "Satellite Receivers," October '88 *VR*), which it, in turn, descrambles. Consumers buy an IRD (integrated receiver descrambler) or an outboard decoder—then they

subscribe to cable-style programming packages. A typical package, including Showtime, the Movie Channel, ESPN, CNN and 13 other channels, costs as little as \$20 per month.

According to industry reports, several pirates have devised methods for thwarting the scrambling system—allowing themselves and their customers to pull in the scrambled programming without paying for subscriptions. Federal law deters such tampering with the threat of stiff fines and prison sentences, yet piracy persists. Partly in response to that threat, GI developed the upgraded VC II-Plus, a superior—and supposedly pirate-proof—scrambling system which will be introduced in the '90s. There's little question the VC II-Plus will be a superior system for receiving satellite TV, the question is: Will consumers have to pay for it? That prospect drew Sen. Albert Gore's (D-TN) attention, and he sent a letter to GI executives insisting that the company maintain compatibility between VC II and VC II-Plus at no charge to users. GI spokesperson Cheri Hart called reports that VC II owners would soon pay for upgrades "ridiculous. All VC II programming will remain on VC II. VC II-Plus is a technology for the '90s and beyond."

**Impulse Pay-Per-View:** The DBS Center works in an ominous yet not-so-mysterious way. It can authorize or de-authorize any legal decoder in any home on the continent at a moment's notice. Taking advantage of this capability,

GI engineers have designed an outboard component (the VideoPal) that allows VC II owners instantaneous access to pay-per-view programming.

Once subscribers install the VideoPal (about \$125), they pay *only* for programs they buy. A monthly bill lists their purchases. GI began tests of the system last May and plans a full-scale rollout this winter. Esther Rodriguez, who as GI's vice president of DBS services spearheads the company's VideoPal effort, expects that "up to 100,000 to 120,000" VC II owners will buy the additional component by the end of this year.

"The circuitry," Rodriguez says, "could be built into IRDs, which would drop the feature's cost significantly."



GI's midprice 2400R IRD: due for an upgrade to VC II-Plus.

**Scrambling Revisited:** Touchstone Video, which is not related to the similarly named software division of Walt Disney, announced plans for a second, scrambled home satellite pay-per-view system last year. Press materials for the venture state that the technology is HDTV-ready, will offer 10 channels of programming, and will charge customers for service through AT&T's billing system.

Consumers wishing to receive the system would rent the receivers for "D-Code" signals, developed jointly by Uniden and Leitch Video Intl., for \$25 to \$30 a month. AT&T would tack a \$4 or \$5 surcharge on the consumer's bill each month for use of the billing service. Beyond this, little is known about the proposed technology, and most industry insiders view it with some skepticism. If successful, though, it could bring the home satellite industry something sorely lacking

in the cable industry: competition. **HDTV and DBS:** Various advanced TV schemes call for a second, augmentation channel, which—when combined with the regular broadcast channel—would provide the sharply detailed, widescreen HDTV image. Much of the current HDTV research centers on methods for delivering that augmentation channel to the consumer.

While some camps favor a network of fiber-optic cables (Bellcore), and others a reassessment of the existing broadcast spectrum (Zenith), DBS still seems the easiest way to go. Japan (Hi-Vision) and Europe (HDMAC) are both planning to use DBS technology to deliver HDTV to consumers.

Touchstone reportedly opted for the new D-Code proposal over VC II because it would adapt more easily to HDTV applications. VideoCipher propone

however, claim to have designed the expanded VC II-Plus for an as-yet-unspecified HDTV capacity. Either way, the FCC will have to set a standard for HDTV transmission before engineers can decide which system best accommodates it.

**Home Data Services:** All IRDs include a data port on the rear panel. With GI's InfoCipher receiver, home office workers have access to a variety of inexpensive data services (such as stock-market and news updates). It all works quite simply. The data receiver (model 1500) is installed between a VC II satellite receiver and a personal computer. A software package then takes the downloaded information and processes it according to the user's wishes. A subscription to the service costs about \$1 a day. As more people turn their homes into work centers, this satellite capacity could develop a significant niche. (G.P.F.)

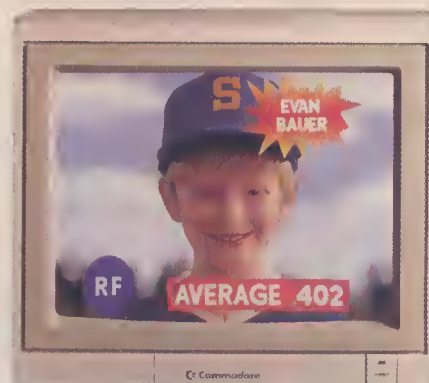




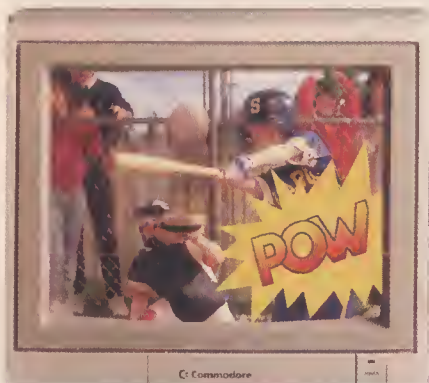
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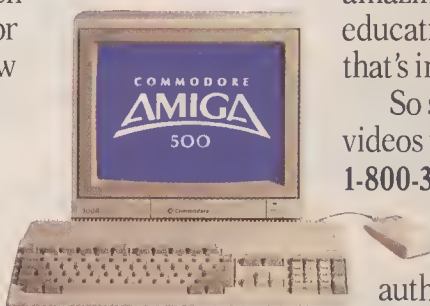
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# VCR Technology

## No.4 in a series of reports from Mitsubishi R&D

### Search and Display

Videotape is a great information storage medium. But finding desired selections on an individual tape can be a chore. Conventional video cassette recorders are burdened with cumbersome search systems, providing no means of identifying selections. With recordings containing up to six hours of programming, time spent locating a particular scene can seem endless.

Our video engineers recognized the problem and set about solving it with their usual ingenuity.

"We realized that search systems must be fast, pinpoint accurate and easy to use," said Mr. Y. Ohtani, manager of Overseas Marketing at Mitsubishi Electric's huge research and manufacturing facility in Kyoto, Japan. "In fact, it sounded like a perfect application for some advanced digital technology.

Preferably, there should be different search systems to suit different tapes — your own tapes, rentals, or those borrowed from friends. And different searches for varied purposes such as locating an approximate part of a program or scanning for a specific still-frame.

Our approach to the problem resulted in a unique range of search and identification modes — at search speeds ranging from twice to 140 times normal playback.

"With our new VCRs, you're literally spoiled with choices," observes Mr. T. Yonekawa, manager of the VCR Engineering department at Mitsubishi Kyoto. "You can locate an exact scene by specific address, by index point or by precise time. All at incredible access speeds.

"You can also scan a tape at twice normal speed, switch to speed search

mode for visual tape advance at ten times normal speed then crank it up to 30 times normal speed (high-speed search in EP mode). There's something for every purpose!"

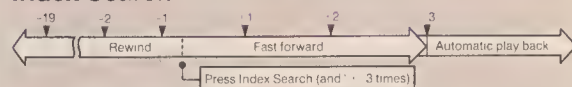
even individual songs from a live jazz concert. The marks are erasable, too, in case you wish to change the position of the addresses or record over the tape.

### Index Search

Index marks are automatically recorded whenever the record button is pressed, and can be inserted manually to mark the beginning of almost any number of programs, films, or even music videos. During playback, up to 19 indexes can be speedily located in either direction by remote control.

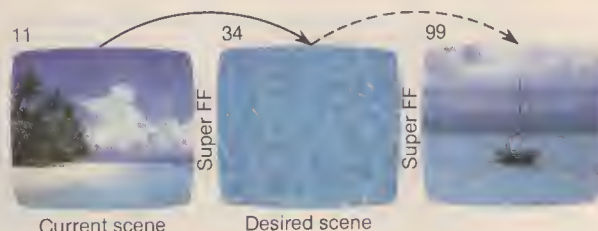


### Index Search

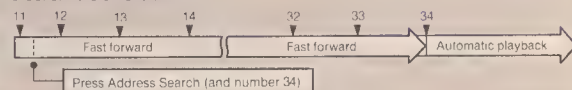


### Address Search

Addresses are merely indexes with numbers, and on the U30, U70 and U80 you can speedily locate any one of up to 99 numbered scenes on a tape. Simply insert an address number on a tape — in either recording or play modes — to permanently mark the start of films, programs,



### Address Search





## Skip Search

While whizzing through a tape in fast forward, skip search slows down to regular speed search whenever it hits an index and shows a short five-second glimpse of the scene. As soon as the desired spot is reached, you can restart playback by touching the play button.

## Time Search

Time search was created because index and address searches are useless with rental videos or borrowed tapes. If you know the length in minutes of the programs on the tape, however, you can select the exact time, to the hour, minute and second, and locate that moment precisely with time search.

## High-Speed Search

The two-speed search system marks a dramatic increase in the bidirectional visual search speeds. By merely holding down the FF and REW search buttons for about a second, speed search doubles from five to ten times normal playback speed in SP and triples from ten to 30 times normal playback speed in EP.

## High-Speed FF/REW

Digital technology has increased the speed of the address, index, and time searches in both FF and REW directions without diminishing their pinpoint accuracy. On the U20 and U50, searches are performed at 75 times normal speed, and at an even more remarkable 140x normal speed on the U30, U70, and U80 in EP.

Our highly flexible search systems make videotape a true rapid-access medium, and they get you to the program you want with a minimum of bother. It's yet another example of new Mitsubishi technology enhancing your viewing enjoyment

# U80

- S-VHS VHS • Twin Digital Tracking
- FX4+2 Video Head • Hi-Fi Stereo Sound
- 14MHz 8-Bit Digital Memory
- Flying Erase Head • Jog Shuttle Control
- On-Screen Programming
- Address, Index and Time Searches
- Dimensions (H×W×D): 5-3/4 × 16-11/16 × 12-3/16"



HS-U80



# U70

- S-VHS VHS • Twin Digital Tracking
- FX4+2 Video Head • Hi-Fi Stereo Sound
- On-Screen Data, Menu & Programming
- Address, Index and Time Searches
- Dimensions (H×W×D): 3-5/16 × 16-11/16 × 12-3/16"



HS-U70

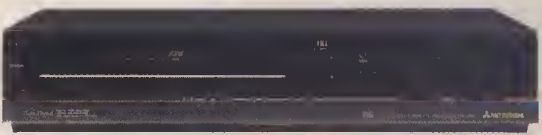


# U50

- Twin Digital Tracking
- FX4+2 Video Head
- Hi-Fi Stereo Sound
- On-Screen Data & Programming
- Index & Time Searches
- Dimensions (H×W×D): 3-5/16 × 16-11/16 × 12-3/16"



HS-U50



# U30

- Twin Digital Tracking
- FX4 Video Head
- On-Screen Data, Menu & Programming
- Address, Index & Time Searches
- Dimensions (H×W×D): 3-5/16 × 16-11/16 × 12-3/16"

HS-U30



# U20

- Twin Digital Tracking
- FX4 Video Head
- On-Screen Data & Programming
- Index & Time Searches
- Dimensions (H×W×D): 3-5/16 × 16-11/16 × 12-3/16"

HS-U20



# MITSUBISHI

Mitsubishi Electric Sales America, Inc.

5757 Plaza Drive, P.O. Box 6007, Cypress, California 90630-0007, U.S.A.



## MODERN CONVENIENCES

Life's little irritations (dead batteries, missing remote controls) expose videophiles to undue stress. These two new products help you avoid such stressful situations.

Arkon designed its CamCharger (\$49.95) for videomakers on the go. CamCharger plugs into an automobile's cigarette lighter and can charge most

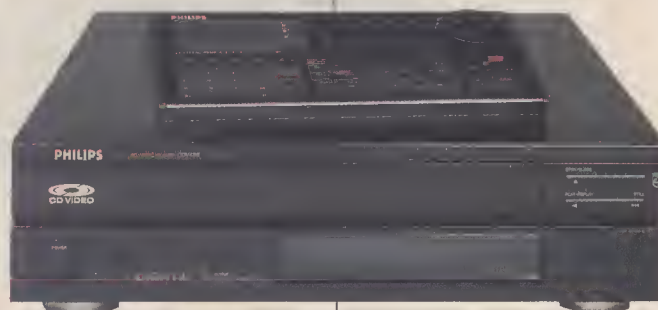


nickel-cadmium (Ni-Cd) batteries. It also operates on AC current and comes with a multiplug adapter cord. Arkon, 11627 Clark St., Suite 101, Arcadia, CA 91006, (818) 358-1133



A learning remote allows you to combine functions from a variety of controlling devices on one convenient remote. Onkyo just introduced its third-generation

Unifire, the RC-AV20 (\$99.95). This new model learns up to 102 commands and has a master A/V switch with color-coded audio and video buttons. Onkyo, 200 Williams Dr., Ramsey, NJ 07446, (201) 825-7950



## PHILIPS Videodisc Player Model CDV488 \$1,300

The latest laser disc player on the block brings two firsts to the street: Y/C separation and eight-inch laser disc singles (LDs, for short). This player uses the same luminance (B&W) and chrominance (color) technology as S-VHS and ED-Beta, which requires an S-video-equipped

monitor for maximum performance. The new thinner, lighter eight-inch LD singles are cheaper to produce than earlier versions. The CDV488 also features 20-track programming, 4x oversampling and gold-plated outputs.

Philips, One Philips Dr., P. O. Box 14810, Knoxville, TN 37914-1810, (615) 521-4316



## VIVITAR Camcorder Lights Models IVL-1, IVL-2

Long a familiar name in the photography business (remember those Orson Welles commercials?), Vivitar has introduced a complete line of camcorder accessories. The IVL-1 (top) uses a standard NP-22 camcorder battery and tilts 45° up or 15° down to better spread its illumination.

The IVL-2 (bottom) works with standard NP-55 and NP-77 batteries. Vivitar, 9350 DeSoto Ave., P. O. Box 2193, Chatsworth, CA 91313-2193, (818) 700-2890

## NIKON Camcorder Model VN-900 \$1,850

This 8mm camcorder has most of the latest high-end features, including a variable high-speed shutter and a digital superimposer with two-page memory and scrolling capability. The six shutter speeds range from the

## SHARP Monitor/Receiver Model 27RV79 \$899.95

Sharp's first 27-inch monitor/receiver uses a comb filter and delivers up to 600 horizontal lines of resolution, according to the manufacturer. This stereo set has a 209-channel cable-ready tuner (with on-screen channel display) and a built-in MTS decoder for stereo-TV reception. An infrared remote (included) also operates many Sharp VCRs. Other features include sleep timer, auto channel memory and A/V inputs.

Sharp, Sharp Plaza, Mahwah, NJ 07430-2135, (201) 529-8890



standard 1/60 to 1/4000 of a second. The less-than-two-pound (without battery) VN-900 uses a 2 2/3-inch, 420,000-pixel CCD (charge coupled device), and Nikon rates minimum illumination at 5 lux. Nikon, 623 Stewart Ave., Garden City, NY 11530, (516) 222-0200





# WIN A Panasonic SUPER SYSTEM OR 60 EXCITING PRIZES in the 1989 PICK THE ViRA WINNERS CONTEST!

Imagine winning a state-of-the-art Panasonic VHS Hi-Fi VCR and a Panasonic high resolution, MTS stereo 27-inch TV monitor PLUS a complete Technics Hi-Fi system -- and 20 ViRA winning hit tapes!

All this can be yours if you're the Grand Prize Winner of the 1989 PICK THE ViRA WINNERS CONTEST sponsored by Video Review and Panasonic.

There will be 10 big Second Prizes offering a deluxe collector's library of 20 ViRA-winning videocassettes of the year's top comedies, dramas, sci-fi movies and thrillers...

AND 50 Third Prizes of a special "Five-Pack" of 5 of the year's top ViRA winning movies!

Tell us who you think will win the coveted ViRA (Video Review Award) in each of these five categories. The ViRA winners will be picked by Video Review's renowned panel of video critics and announced in a gala ceremony in Hollywood on March 2nd..

## ENTER TODAY -- IT'S AS EASY AS 1-2-3!!

- 1 - Simply select the one video from each category that you'll find on the Official Entry Form...
- 2 - Mail your entry BEFORE March 1, 1989...
- 3 - And look for the May Edition of VIDEO REVIEW for the winners!

## PICK THE WINNERS!!



Additional Entry Forms available at local Video Stores nation wide.

### OFFICIAL RULES

No Purchase Necessary.

1. To enter the PICK THE ViRA WINNERS CONTEST, handprint on an Official Entry Form or plain 3" X 5" piece of paper, your name, address and your guess as to who you think will be the ViRA winner in each of the five categories (comedy, drama, thriller, sci-fi, horror). Mail your entry to: PICK THE ViRA WINNERS CONTEST, P.O. Box 3049, Syosset, NY 11775-3049. Each entry must be mailed separately and received by March 15, 1989.

2. Winners will be selected in a random drawing from among all entries containing at least one of the correct answers, and received prior to the end of the contest. In the event the number of prizes exceeds the number of correct entries received, winners will be selected from among all entries received. Drawing will be conducted by National Judging Institute, Inc., an independent judging organization whose decisions are final on matters relating to this contest. All prizes will be awarded and winners notified by mail. Only one prize per individual or household. Prizes are not transferable and may not be exchanged. All manufacturers' warranties apply. Taxes, if any are the responsibility of the individual winners. Winners may be required to execute an affidavit of eligibility and release. No responsibility is assumed for lost, misdirected or late entries or mail.

3. Contest is open to residents of the U.S., except employees and their families if Viare Publishing Corp., Matsushita Electric Corporation of America, their affiliates, subsidiaries, advertising and promotion agencies, and Don Jagoda Associates, Inc. Void in Puerto Rico and wherever else prohibited. Subject to all federal, state and local laws.

4. For a list of winners send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

VIDEO REVIEW AWARDS CONTEST  
WINNERS LIST  
P.O. Box 3068  
Syosset, NY 11775-3068

## ENTRY FORM

Pick The ViRA Winners Contest

P.O. Box 3049 Syosset, NY 11775-3049

Here are my choices! Tell me if I'm the winner!! (Please mark only one movie per category).

### BEST COMEDY

- ☐ Baby Boom (CBS/Fox)
- ☐ Broadcast News (CBS/Fox)
- ☐ Hairspray (RCA/Columbia)
- ☐ Housekeeping (RCA/Columbia)
- ☐ Living on Tokyo Time (Charter)
- ☐ The Milagro Beanfield War (MCA)
- ☐ Moonstruck (MGM/UA)
- ☐ Planes, Trains and Automobiles (Paramount)
- ☐ Throw Momma From The Train (Orion)
- ☐ The Witches of Eastwick (Warner)
- ☐ Withnail and I (Media)

### BEST DRAMA

- ☐ The Dunera Boys (Prism)
- ☐ DA (Virgin)

- ☐ Empire of the Sun (Warner)
- ☐ Fat City (RCA/Columbia)
- ☐ Full Metal Jacket (Warner)
- ☐ Hope and Glory (Nelson)
- ☐ The Last Emperor (Nelson)
- ☐ Matewan (Lorimar)
- ☐ Maurice (Lorimar)
- ☐ Nuts (Warner)
- ☐ Shy People (Warner)
- ☐ Stand and Deliver (Warner)
- ☐ The Unbearable Lightness of Being (Orion)
- ☐ Wall Street (CBS/Fox)
- ☐ The Whales of August (Nelson)

### BEST THRILLER

- ☐ Best Seller (Vestron)
- ☐ Cop (Paramount)

- ☐ Fatal Attraction (Paramount)
- ☐ Jack's Back (Paramount)
- ☐ The Manchurian Candidate (MGM/UA)
- ☐ No Way Out (HBO)
- ☐ Off Limits (CBS/Fox)
- ☐ Stakeout (Touchstone)

### BEST SCI-FI OR FANTASY

- ☐ E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial (MCA)
- ☐ Innerspace (Warner)
- ☐ The Princess Bride (Nelson)
- ☐ Willow (RCA/Columbia)

### BEST ACTION-ADVENTURE

- ☐ Hamburger Hill (Vestron)
- ☐ The Living Daylights (CBS/Fox)
- ☐ Red Heat (IVE)
- ☐ The Untouchables (Paramount)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

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company, best known for its Criterion line of videophile discs, just introduced The Box (\$199.95), which lets you connect your LV player to a Macintosh personal computer. Once the connection is made, you can view top-quality freeze-frames on the LV player and access descriptions of them from a database on the Macintosh. The Box provides an RS-232 computer interface output for interactive use—something current consumer LV players lack. The Voyager Co., 2139 Manning Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90025 (213) 474-0032

NEC now offers a VHS VCR in Japan with an RS-232 interface, reportedly with an eye to linking NEC's A/V and computer lines more closely. An NEC spokesperson says that the RS-232 won't show up on any of the company's US decks this year.

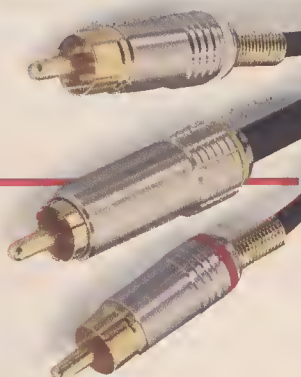
—Gregory P. Fagan

### SONY 8mm Camcorder Model CCD-V11 \$1,850

With its newly developed tape-drive mechanism (see "Newsbreaks," Oct. '88 VR) the two-pound CCD-V11 may be Sony's handiest 8mm camcorder yet. The manufacturer rates the camcorder's low-light capability at 5 lux, thanks to a  $\frac{2}{3}$ -inch CCD image sensor with 380,000 effective pixels. In addition to the conventional  $\frac{1}{60}$ -of-a-second shutter speed, a switch allows you to shoot at  $\frac{1}{100}$ ,  $\frac{1}{250}$ ,  $\frac{1}{1000}$  and  $\frac{1}{4000}$ -of-a-second speeds. The digital superimposer has a two-page memory



with eight colors. The through-the-lens auto focus and white balance take direct readouts from the image sensor. Sony, One Sony Dr., Park Ridge, NJ 07656 (201) 930-1000



tuner. Other features include on-screen clock and channel, last-channel recall, an ambience-adding stereo-wide effect and a sleep timer. Yamaha, 6660 Orangethorpe Ave., Buena Park, CA 90620 (714) 522-9105

### YAMAHA Monitor/Receiver Model YM-270S \$899

Yamaha's new 27-inch color monitor/receiver has a rear panel that includes an S-video input, two A/V inputs and outputs, dual RF inputs and an RF output. A built-in amp can feed 2.5 watts per channel to the stereo speakers, or 4.5 watts each to an external set. The YM-270S receives 142 channels on its MTS-decoding PLL (phase lock loop) synthesis



### ORA A/V Cables Model OFCs \$21.99 to \$59.99

These oxygen-free copper (OFC) videophile cables use "titaniumavilenco" shielding around a 99.996% pure copper core, according to the manufacturer. Ora offers six models: single (video), double (audio) or triple lead (A/V, shown)—each available in either one-meter or two-meter lengths. ORA, 20120 Plummer St., P.O. Box 4029 Chatsworth, CA 91313 (818) 701-5848



### NEC Laptop Computer UltraLite \$2,999

This laptop earns its name by tipping the scales at  $4\frac{2}{3}$  pounds, with batteries. Folded, it's less than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick, yet it includes a one-megabyte hard disk, 640 kilobytes of random access memory and NEC's V-30, 9.83 MHz central processor. The IBM-compatible PC has a backlit liquid crystal display with 640x200 pixel resolution. NEC, 1255 Michael Dr., Wood Dale, IL 60191 (312) 860-9500



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# HOLLYWOOD'S VIDEO INVASION

Video has changed not only the way we watch movies, but also how they get made.

By Ed Hulse

While the midday summer sun bakes the sleepy warehouse district in Valencia, California, one building hums with activity. Previously an empty warehouse, it's been converted into a miniature movie soundstage where *A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master* is in its final week of shooting.

The cavernous building is dominated by an enormous mock-up of a ruined church partly obscured by thick clouds of chemically induced fog—the setting for archvillain Freddy Krueger's climactic scene. While Freddy's nemesis Alice (Lisa Wilcox) relaxes between shots in one of the pews, cinematographer Steven Fierberg paces the set, struggling to light the scene in a way that preserves its hazy, shrouded look but that will still show up clearly on both theater and home screens.

If *Nightmare 4* had been produced in Hollywood by a major movie studio, it might have consumed twice its \$6 million budget. But by working out here in Valencia—a virtual outback, by Hollywood's standards—using inexpensive, non-union crews and shooting in a warehouse instead of an elaborate soundstage, *Nightmare 4* producer Media Home Entertainment has cut costs to the bone. But Media doesn't care about doing things the tradi-

tional Hollywood way. That's because Media (which produces the *Nightmare* series in partnership with New Line Cinema) isn't a movie studio—it's a video company. And like several other video companies today, Media has occasionally managed to beat the major Hollywood studios at their own game.

The *Nightmare on Elm Street* phenomenon—which, to date, includes four hugely successful movies, spectacular video sales and the extensive licensing of Freddy Krueger products—demonstrates just how high the stakes can get in what might be called "the new Hollywood." Tinseltown just ain't what it used to be, and home video is now a major force in shaping how movies are made and even what movies get made. The reason is simple: "The total combined boxoffice take in America is projected to be about \$4 billion," explains Vestron Video president Jon Peisinger. "Video revenue at retail will be double that amount."

In bygone days, the major Hollywood studios controlled the movie industry from the first spark of an idea to the projection of a finished feature on a theater screen. The majors handled everything—production, advertising, distribution and even exhibition—until government antitrust actions and the growth of television finally eroded the long-standing foundations of the studio

empires, a process that was complete by the early '70s. By then, the making of movies by independent producers for studio distribution had irrevocably altered Hollywood's financial infrastructure, both creating and destroying investment opportunities.

Ironically, home video—once looked upon by mainstream Hollywood as a minor source of potential extra profit—has come to play a major role in the ongoing financial evolution of the movie business. The studios themselves, initially slow to tumble to video's potential, finally launched video distribution arms. But video has also led to the growth of new ministudios, such as Media and *Dirty Dancing* producer Vestron. These are video companies which have begun producing first-run theatrical pictures partly as a way to satisfy their movie-hungry video customers.

While hard numbers are hard to come by, the average video viewer clearly sees far more movies on video each year than in theaters. Partly to supply that demand (as well as that of such ancillary markets as cable TV and foreign distribution), a lot more movies are being made today: As of Nov. 1, 1988, according to the Motion Picture Association of America, 484 movies had been produced domestically last year, compared to 169 for all of 1982. But are

these video-inspired movies—many of which



Illustration: Yvonne Buchanan

are bankrolled by video companies—as good as those that were aimed strictly for the silver screen? Or does video money ensure production of certain types of flicks just because they rent well on tape? Some observers suggest that video-supplier investment contributed to the influx of cheapie horror movies—most of them interchangeable slasher pics—appearing in theaters and on store shelves over the last few years. And, if that's true, does the easy-buck mentality inhibit video-financed production of more mature, challenging movie fare?

The *Nightmare on Elm Street* series offers a striking example of video-bankrolled moviemaking. Media Home Entertainment, the home video subsidiary of the international Heron Com-

for the producers. It turned into one of the biggest theatrical releases of the summer, at presstime bringing in some \$48 million.

But video investors aren't always so lucky. Take the case of *Santa Claus—The Movie*. Several years ago Media made video-industry history by purchasing cassette marketing rights to *Santa Claus* for over \$4 million, before a single foot of film was shot. Yet Media neither had any

creative input nor exercised any control on the marketing of the multimillion dollar production—which flopped on both big screens and small. Sounds crazy? Perhaps . . . until you consider that companies such as Media, without the advantage of major-studio ties, have often been desperate for rights to megahit movies like, say, *Star Wars* or *Fatal Attraction*.

The consequences of Media's *Santa*



On the set of *Nightmare 4*—a theatrical feature financed with video dollars—star Robert Englund is transformed into Freddy Krueger.

munications media empire, totally finances the Freddy Krueger epics. (The initial *Nightmare* movie, in fact, was among the first theatrical releases totally financed by a video company.) The *Nightmare* movies are made on small (by major studio standards), carefully controlled budgets. Lower production outlays make it easier for producers to recoup their investment in the theatrical marketplace, where movies have to bring in at least three times their production costs to turn a profit. In the case of *Nightmare 4*, the income from the movie's pre-Christmas video release was pure gravy



# Was it dirty, or

How to make a dirty movie: 1) Use lots of movies in your VCR (and e



*Claus* deal brought shudders to independent video suppliers industry-wide. As a result, most video investors today are far more involved in how their projects are produced and marketed to the theaters.

That involvement can take different forms: Some companies, like Media and Vestron, have invested money, time and talent in the production of full-fledged theatrical offerings designed for wide-

spread audience approval. Others, such as the now-defunct Urban Classics, make movies primarily for video audiences but release them to a handful of theaters in order to generate at least a little public awareness. And others, such as International Video Entertainment (IVE), have aligned themselves with movie-producing companies via corporate investment or merger.

In 1986, IVE signed a deal with Carolco

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*Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey dance Dirty in the movie that put Vestron Pictures on the map.*

Pictures (which produces, among other big-budget titles, Sylvester Stallone's *Rambo* movies) giving the video company exclusive American and Canadian video rights to all Carolco movies released through July 1992. The deal calls for significant financial commitment from IVE, which advances up to \$6 million for A titles (and \$8 million for the *Rambo* movies).

On any major movie for which a video company pays \$8 million for cassette rights, that company need only sell 185,000 copies (at a wholesale price of about \$56 each, which is dealer cost on most titles priced at \$89.95) to break even. It goes without saying that any video release selling in excess of 300,000 copies—not an unreasonable number for an A title—will bring in huge profits for the independent program supplier. Of course, that goes both ways; an expensive pre-buy arrangement for a big title that turns out to be a boxoffice turkey could, and does, portend grave fiscal calamity.

Vestron Video, one of the industry's pioneer independent suppliers, threw its corporate hat into the Hollywood arena three years ago. The decision to form a theatrical division, Vestron Pictures, in January *Continued on page 82*

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**VIDEONICS**





## How to Pick the VCR That's Right for You... and How to Shop for It

# THE ART OF THE DEAL

BY GREGORY P. FAGAN

They say that people can be divided into two basic categories: those who like to shop and those who don't. That may or may not be true, but when it comes to shopping for a VCR what's indisputable is that you need to be, as they say, an educated consumer. In other words, when you buy a VCR you should know what you plan to use it for *and* where and how to get the best possible value for your money. That goes for first-timers and video veterans alike.

So let's say you're in the market for a new VCR, but you're feeling a little intimidated by the range of choices and the thought of hitting the stores. What should you do? Just read on, actually. We've identified the five most common types of VCR buyers—chances are, you'll recognize yourself as one of them—and selected an ideal deck for each, based on features, value, price and performance. We've also done some undercover work at a cross section of typical electronics stores, so you'll know what to expect once you're ready to undergo the Retail Experience. If you arm yourself with the info that follows, then making a

deal for the right VCR will be easy, fun and even—dare we say it?—an art.

### CHOOSING YOUR VCR: DIALING FOR DOLLARS?

- The first potential VCR buyer on our list is on a tight budget (\$300 or less), owns a color TV without A/V inputs and just wants to watch rented movies and (occasionally) record a favorite TV show while out of the house. That spells a simple, no-frills VCR—which, paradoxically, can be the most difficult to choose.

In this price range, there are basic remote-controlled decks with two video heads, mono sound and timers that let you record a few programs during a one- or two-week period and time-shift a few TV shows. The decidedly unflashy GE VG7500 deck we chose in this price range (see "Shopping List," page 33) fits the bill perfectly.

So why is it a difficult shopping choice? Because in an average store it probably shares the discount shelf with a variety of Brand X decks, as-is floor samples and discontinued models. Any of these, at a casual



Illustration: Mark Falls

# DEAL

glance, may seem to offer more than the GE in terms of features (some of the discontinued items, in fact, may really be bargains). But caveat emptor: In general, if you find a deck with four heads or Hi-Fi sound *and* a \$250 price tag, a great big warning light should flash in your head.

- Our second consumer has the same type of TV as above but wants a few special effects, a higher level of convenience and is willing to spend **\$400 to \$500**. All that stuff adds up to a four-head deck. (Actually, the basic A/V recording and playback performance of a four-head deck differs little from a two-head, but the extra heads clean up and stabilize the picture when you scan, freeze-frame or use slow-motion.)

The four-head NEC N-928U we selected also features on-screen programming, in our opinion a must in this price range (most people find it easier to interact with on-screen prompts than to push those tiny buttons behind the flip-down door). More expensive decks frequently offer friendlier variations (bar codes, light pens, LCD remotes). But even the rudimentary on-screen programming level offered on the NEC is a real step up.

- Our third shopper owns a stereo TV or monitor/receiver with A/V inputs and wants to hook a new VCR up to the stereo for added dramatic effect. The **\$500 to \$750** that this consumer plans to spend will buy a deck that passed for high end as recently as three years ago. That means it includes features such as Hi-Fi stereo, an MTS decoder (for receiving stereo-TV broadcasts), fine slow-motion, a remote that also operates matching TVs and indexing in the record and play modes.

In this range, you expect convenience *and* performance. You get it in the Magnavox VR2072 we opted for, which boasts terrific Hi-Fi with TV stereo sound, an easily programmed timer, scan, freeze and slow-motion effects in most modes, and tape indexing that lets you make invisible cues in an existing program for easy future reference. That last feature is a real plus for movie buffs and home videographers, and it's not necessarily a given on other decks in this price range, although most of them (including the Magnavox) place an index cue on the tape whenever you start recording.

- Our fourth VCR buyer is ready to spend **\$750 to \$1,000**, which takes us into S-VHS territory. Consumers spending this much money obviously want more than Hi-Fi. And even if they don't have a TV



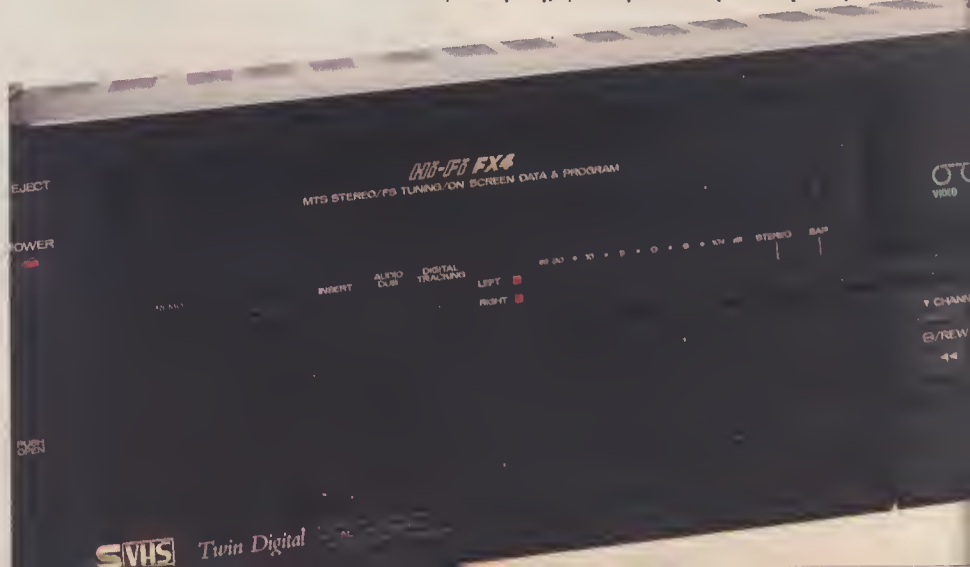
## HQ BARGAIN GE VG7500

**FEATURES:** Mono sound, two heads, three-speed record and play, 110-channel tuner, 14-day/four-event programming, scan and freeze-frame in EP mode. **COMMENTS:** If you just want to play rental movies and maybe tape an occasional TV program, this deck is fine. **PRICE:** \$299 (list); \$259 (lowest quoted price).



## HI-FI STEAL

**MAGNAVOX VR2072** (The VR9760—\$699 list—is similar but has a few less high-tech cosmetic touches.) **FEATURES:** Hi-Fi stereo sound, four heads, three-speed record and play, 155-channel tuner, 31-day/eight-event on-screen programming, scan in all modes, freeze-frame in SP and EP modes, fine slow-motion, indexing in both record and play modes. **COMMENTS:** Less than four years ago, a deck with these features would have gone for about \$1,000. At that price, it still wouldn't have had the VR2072's indexing or fine slow-motion capability. **PRICE:** \$799 (list); \$569 (lowest quoted price).







#### FOUR-HEAD BEAUTY

NEC N-928U

FEATURES: Mono sound, four heads, three-speed record and play, 110-channel tuner, 21-day/eight-event on-screen programming, scan and freeze-frame in all modes, slow-motion. COMMENTS: Stereo and Hi-Fi fall outside some consumers' budgets, but they still want four-head special effects and full eight-event on-screen programming. PRICE: \$529 (list); \$399 (lowest quoted price).

*the Shopping List*



#### SUPER DEAL

PANASONIC PV-S4864

FEATURES: S-VHS, Hi-Fi stereo sound, four heads, three-speed record and play, 155-channel tuner, 28-day/eight-event on-screen bar-code programming, scan in all modes, freeze-frame in SP and EP modes, fine slow-motion, indexing in both record and play modes. COMMENTS: Though it carries a big premium over similar non-S-VHS decks, such as the aforementioned Magnovox VR2072, it still provides the best picture available for the price. PRICE: \$950 (list); \$849 (lowest quoted price).



#### THE KITCHEN SINK

MITSUBISHI HS-U80

FEATURES: S-VHS, Hi-Fi stereo sound, four heads, two record speeds, three play speeds, 181-channel tuner, 31-day/eight-event on-screen programming, scan and freeze-frame in all modes, fine slow-motion, indexing in both record and play modes, jog/shuttle wheel, digital PIP with last-frame editing recall, digital tracking, flying erase head. COMMENTS: You sometimes get what you pay for. And in this case, both the price and the performance are considerable. (See "Equipment Reviews," Sept. '88 VR and "Best Products of the Year," Dec. '88 VR for more on this fine deck.) PRICE: \$1,699 (list); \$1,699 (lowest quoted price).



# DEAL

with an S-video input, they *do* have a high-quality monitor/receiver that will reproduce most of the S-VHS benefits, such as the dramatic boost in image quality you get if you time-shift on a single tape in the EP (six-hour) mode.

Our S-VHS deck of choice is the Panasonic PV-S4864, which adds convenient bar-code programming to features similar to the (standard VHS) Magnavox. We considered recommending high-end NEC or Yamaha VHS decks with digital noise reduction in this price category (stores we visited offered better discounts on these than on the Panasonic), but S-VHS capability seemed well worth the extra hundred bucks.

• Our final VCR enthusiast has an unlimited budget (\$1,000 and up), or at least one that allows for the S-VHS megadeck of his/her dreams. In this category, the Mitsubishi HS-U80 wins hands down. VCRs in this price range should offer everything that less expensive machines do and *much* more. That means digital special effects, front-panel A/V jacks, a jog/shuttle wheel and a flying erase head, and—in the case of the

Mitsubishi—digital PIP that works in tandem with the jog/shuttle and the flying erase features. Of course, for a few dollars less, consumers can find extraordinary S-VHS decks with digital effects only, but hey, we like to make our own movies.

## RETAIL: IS IT A JUNGLE OUT THERE?

We formulated our list of archetypal shoppers and their recommended decks before we visited 35 suburban electronics stores in the New York and New Jersey area, masquerading as Joe Consumer. Having made that little trek, we've also come up with some basic rules for VCR shoppers. To wit:

1. *Know what features you want or need before you walk into any store.*
2. *Select a few potential models that have the right mix of features for you. (To get started, use VR's Oct. '88 Buyer's Guide.)*
3. *Do not take the first and second rules lightly.*

These sound simple enough, but our undercover research jaunt taught us that shopping for a deck requires more than a fair amount of consumer wariness.

Which is not to say that any of the salespeople we met were particularly shifty or crooked—they weren't. Actually, most of them tried to match us up with products that seemed to suit our needs. On the other hand, we did meet some rather incompetent types, and we were disappointed to find so few who were genuine videophiles

themselves. In fact, during our store tour we found a startlingly high percentage of clerks who relied, exclusively, on the manufacturers' stickers, tags and labels for information and, as a result, knew little more about their wares than the average consumer.

One signal that a potential VCR buyer should approach with caution involves in-store displays. A few of the shops we visited were exemplary in that regard—they had their VCRs hooked up to monitors—but most kept their decks lined up in rows on shelves or stacked atop boxes on the floor. Why make it impossible for the consumer to comparison-shop effectively? One salesperson at a Crazy Eddie's outlet in New Jersey told us that his decks were lined up—unplugged on the shelf—because, "When I'm out of stock, I'll sell the floor model. I can get a lot more for it if it's never been plugged in." That sounds logical—if you accept, as this guy did, that "they're all pretty much the same." The Test Reports we publish from the Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory, however, consistently prove otherwise.

Of course, being able to try out a VCR in the store is not in itself any kind of guarantee. Electronics industry insiders have known for years that some stores often rig their VCR comparisons. This is done to dissuade a customer from buying a product that the store has on its shelves but doesn't really want to sell, an item that's "nailed to the floor." For example, a dealer who isn't

*Continued on page 85*

## LIES MY SALESMAN TOLD ME

• "Sony doesn't make a VHS deck and won't for at least two years. Maybe they'll surprise us, but I doubt it." Surprise! An electronics store a half-mile away had Sony's SLV-70HF VCR on display and in stock.

• "You'll only notice the difference between Hi-Fi and linear stereo when the VCR is hooked up to your stereo system." Maybe underwater, but in an overage room the difference is easily distinguished—even when you route the audio through a TV set's tiny speakers.

• "NEC? That's Nippon European Co., the second biggest company in Japan." Yep, that Nippon Electric Co. sure is big. Getting the name wrong, or giving a dubious ronking (NEC is one of Japan's biggest companies, but it's not number two), isn't so much a lie as a glib pacifier from the "don't worry, buy happy" school.

• "HQ just means high quality. It's a term the manufacturers coined when they souped up the

transport mechanism a few years back." Sure, and that "FUEL INJECTION" sticker on my Volkswagen means that the tires are bigger. The ubiquitous HQ circuits, which don't affect the transport system, help improve picture sharpness.

• "S-VHS is new, so it's a little hard to get parts for." Ports is ports—and S-VHS decks use most of the same ones as standard VHS decks. The higher resolution circuitry, heads and Y/C signal routing shouldn't cause major repair delays.

• "If your set doesn't have the S/Y jack, you won't be able to tell the difference between S-VHS and a regular deck." That's o Y/C or S-video input. And, as we've reported before, any monitor capable of 400-plus lines will deliver a dramatically improved picture with on S-VHS signal, even without the S-video input.

• "And if you dub your current VHS movies onto S-VHS, they're naturally going to look better than

the originals." Can you say alchemy? Sure you can. The copies may look closer to the originals than conventional VHS copies would, but there is always some quality lost in the dubbing process.

• "You won't see that Mitsubishi HS-U80 for three months. They've had production problems." And how long have you been doting Margan Fairchild? Seven of the 35 stores investigated had the HS-U80 on display.

• "With S-VHS, the special tape moves past the heads at a much faster pace than with regular VHS, so you get 560 lines of picture information on the tape, as opposed to 220 or so lines with regular VHS or broadcast TV." Admittedly, the hand gestures that went along with this claim almost convinced me of its accuracy. But really, the tape doesn't go any faster. S-VHS delivers up to 440 lines, VHS 240 lines, broadcast TV 330 lines. Whew, I'm sure glad I don't work at Rocket Science Review. —G.P.F.

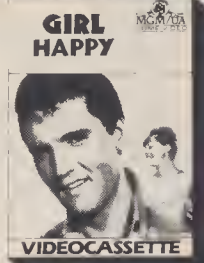






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Trouble With Girls

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**Akai VS-33U**  
4-Head Quick Start VHS Video Recorder  
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• DX4-head system with HQ circuitry • 107 channel cable ready tuner with 62 presets  
• Wireless remote • 30 day/4 event

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**Panasonic PV4870**  
Digital, 4 heads, HQ, on-screen . . . **\$449<sup>95</sup>**  
**Samsung VP2210**  
3-speed VHS playback deck . . . **\$169<sup>95</sup>**  
**Toshiba M7605**  
4-head, 19-function remote . . . **\$299<sup>95</sup>**  
**Sharp VC1106**  
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### VCR Specials



SUPER VHS HI-FI

**Panasonic PV4864**  
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# Choice cuts

## *The Basics of Home Video Editing*

**B**acon, lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise and bread are just ingredients until you put them together into a sandwich. Any aficionado of this classic coffee-shop specialty will tell you that using too much or too little bacon or lettuce, or the wrong kind of bread will ruin the experience. The sandwich is still a BLT, but it's not right.

Similar caveats apply when editing your home videotapes into real video movies. The raw footage is just a pile of possibilities until you decide what will go into your program and what will stay on the cutting-room floor. Your goal is to construct the program to your taste and (hopefully) to the tastes of your intended viewers. And to do that, you've got to edit.

Of course, before you can start forming your epic, you need an edit system, which requires, at the very least, two record/playback systems. That could mean two VCRs, one VCR and one camcorder or even two camcorders. If you've already got a VCR with a jog/shuttle wheel, flying erase heads and/or the latest digital video effects, good for you—they're becoming a more commonplace item for home videographers. If you don't, what follows will tell you how to set up a bare-bones video editing system that will start you off on the right foot. Then we'll dive into the fun part: applying creative methods to avoid "laying it on too thick or too thin."

In the decades before the invention of video, when a film editor said he was "cutting some footage," he meant just that. He used a movieola (a sort of combination film projector and magnifying glass) or would simply eyeball the film footage to find the frames at which each shot was to begin and end, and he cut the film at those points. Then the editor would glue the shots end to end with a special cement. If a shot needed to be shortened or removed altogether, the editor would simply cut out the unwanted footage and cement the two loose ends together. Simple!

Although it has the same goal, videotape editing is an electronic process, not a physical one. Video frames can't be seen with the naked eye, and videotape will crease if handled. In video editing, scissors and blades are replaced with video decks and monitors.

Modern videotape editing can be accurately described as selective dubbing. Edit controllers and other equipment can make video editing even easier than film cutting. But, for basic video editing, you don't necessarily need expensive editing accessories (although they can be a big help, particularly when you want to accomplish sophisticated effects). The only requirement for video editing is the two video decks, one of which ideally should have flying erase heads

Illustrations: Robert Zimmerman



BY BASIL NESTOR



(which give you the ability to pause while recording without producing video breakup—a.k.a. glitches). This is where a camcorder can come in handy. Virtually all 8mm camcorders include flying erase heads, and the feature is showing up on many VHS camcorders, too. Even some high-end VHS and Beta VCRs now include flying erase heads. If only one of your pieces of gear has a flying erase head, that's the piece you should use as your record deck.

In the basic editing setup, one deck will play back your raw (original camera or camcorder) footage. The second deck will record the new sequence of shots. Editing isn't possible unless the record deck receives video and (if you want synchronous sound) audio signals from the playback deck. This is a simple enough proposition: Connect the video and audio output jacks on the playback deck to the video and audio input jacks on the record deck. Also, if you've been wondering what the "edit" switch on your VCR is for, wonder no more. It's used to cut down on the picture-boosting HQ circuitry that helps define edges better during playback but can create distortion when dubbing. Keep this switch in the "on" position on your playback deck.

It's a good idea to have a separate video monitor for each deck (if you are using your camcorder, of course, you can use the viewfinder). Most people put the playback deck to the left of the record deck or sometimes above it. Labeling the VCRs and monitors "playback" and "record" will help you keep track of what footage—raw or edited—you're watching. This system won't let you get too fancy, but it will suffice for most basic cutting purposes.

Let's say you have three raw camera shots, designated A, B and C. Each shot lasts 30 seconds, but you want only the middle 10 seconds of each shot in your finished program. In addition, you want the shots in an order different from the way they appear in their raw form: Shot C should come first, followed by B. The original shot A is to be the final shot in your edited sequence. Here's how it goes: Insert a blank tape in the record deck, hit record, and pause the tape. Put the raw footage in the playback deck and cue it up to shot C. At that point, back the tape up a bit (using the reverse picture-search feature on your VCR), leaving at least five seconds of video *before* the part of shot C you want in your finished program. This section is called pre-roll, and it's important. When you press play on a deck

that has been on pause, the picture and sound take a few seconds to get back to full quality, and you don't want to be dubbing glitch-filled video with poor sound.

Roll the raw tape and wait for the in cue (the first desired frame) to appear. As it does, release the pause on the record deck. Keep your finger ready, because 10 seconds later—that is, once the portion of shot C intended for your final program has played through (this point is called, logically enough, the out cue), you need to pause the record deck again. Now cue up shot B on the playback deck and repeat the process, remembering to use pre-roll. Play your raw tape, and as the part of shot B you want in your edited program appears, release the pause on the record deck.

Pause the record deck again when the portion of shot B you

want in your program has finished. Repeat the process for shot A. When you're done you'll have an unchanged raw tape in your playback deck, but in your record deck you'll have a videotape with three shots, C, B and A, each lasting 10 seconds. To keep timing accurate, you should have at least one deck with a real-time display counter; if not, have a friend close by with a stopwatch.

If your cuts break up (roll, glitch or show color bursts) you may not be allowing enough pre-roll on your playback deck. Five seconds is usually sufficient time for the playback deck to reach the proper speed and send out a stable signal to the recorder, but some decks require seven or even 10 seconds. A couple of practice sessions with your setup will help you determine the temperament of your equipment.

• • •

## How to Cut Creatively

Of course, this setup isn't terribly accurate when it comes to selecting the precise beginnings and endings of shots. Frame-by-frame choices are impossible, and so is replacing shots without a glitch (known to pros as insert editing; the process described above is called assemble editing). Edit controllers and a number of high-end decks allow you to perform both tasks, and some automatically pre-roll both decks so you can see the flow of action from one shot to another.

Even if you don't have access to this kind of sophisticated equipment, creative editing is still very much within your reach. The key is to use your imagination, tempered by a little common visual sense, which also comes into play when you're actually shooting (see "Straight Shooting: A Few Lessons in Visual Grammar," Sept. '88 *V/R*). After all, that's the same criterion used by professional film and video editors when deciding how to assemble their shots.

### Rule #1: Don't put in what you don't need.

Your program tells a story, so don't let it wander. Once a shot has made its point, cut to another shot. Even if your subject is absolutely fascinating, you'll ruin the effect if you hold the shot too long. Conversely, don't end your shot before the audience can identify what's in it (unless you're going for a trendy MTV look). A good rule of thumb is no less than four seconds and no more than seven seconds for each shot, unless the action warrants another length. Give more time to wide, densely packed shots, less for close-ups. When the action finishes, cut! Nothing's more annoying to an audience than a shot that's held even though everything that's going to happen has already occurred.

### Rule #2: Avoid jump cuts.

When something in a shot doesn't match what was in the preceding shot, you have a jump cut. For example, if you show a man holding a cup of coffee with his left hand, and in the next shot—seen from the same camera angle—he is holding the cup with his right hand, that's a jump cut. Jump cuts are jarring and confusing to the viewer. They bend reality, so they can be good for comedic or surrealistic effects. But unless that's your intention, stay away from jump cuts. Avoiding them can be a challenge if you've got a single-shot soliloquy you want to shorten. This brings us to our next point . . .

### Rule #3: Use cutaways.

A cutaway is a shot used to cover a jump cut. In the preceding example, if you put a shot of a steaming coffeepot between the two shots of the coffee drinker, the jump cut would be avoided. The viewer assumes that during the cutaway the coffee drinker switched hands. The appearance of reality is maintained.

The cutaway technique is also used on interview shows, such as *60 Minutes*. In such situations, the subject will be talking as the shot cuts to the interviewer. These shots of the interviewer are actually done before or after the interview and are inserted during the editing process to add visual variety. You shouldn't use an establishing shot (which introduces the setting of your program) as a cutaway, since repeating a shot you've already used will detract from the momentum of your program.

### Rule #4: Compress and expand time.

Let's say you use a clock on the wall rather than a coffeepot as your cutaway. If you cut back to the clock a second time and it reads one hour later, you've established that an hour has passed while the





## WEREWOLF AMOUR: BEFORE AND AFTER

As the top block of illustrations shows, raw video footage doesn't always play very well. It starts out with the waitress carrying a tray of coffee, then cuts to a sequence of shots of the man with a cup. Not only does this sequence last too long, it also has some awkward jump cuts—for example, the shot cuts directly from the rising of the moon to the man's transformation into a werewolf. Furthermore, the chase scene comes in from the wrong side of the frame—it'll have to be reshot.

Once that's done, though, and you've edited the sequence, the story makes a lot more sense. It begins with the man drinking too much coffee and then cuts away to the waitress, thus ridding the scene of a jump cut by using a cutaway. The reshot action renders the chase scene in the correct direction, leading seamlessly into the surprise ending in which lycanthropic love is declared.



person was drinking coffee—even though the shots may have been taped 10 seconds apart. An example of this is the classic Time Bomb Ticking While the Hero Fights sequence. In this situation, the last 15 seconds on the bomb's timer are usually stretched to at least a minute of screen time during which the hero repels the bad guys. A clock isn't necessary for this effect; all you need are two separate, yet related, streams of action.

### Rule #5: Use screen direction to your advantage.

"Heeeere's Johnny!" We all know where the revered talk-show host sits: center stage. But from the home viewer's point of view, is Doc to the left or right of Johnny? Where is Ed? Well, of course Doc is on the right and Ed is on the left, but the only way we know this is from the direction each turns when looking off screen. Rarely do Johnny, Ed and Doc appear in the same shot. Ed could be in Peoria, but if he is videotaped looking to his left (the viewer's right), it would seem as if he were looking at Johnny.

Screen direction is not as important if you're putting together unrelated shots (for example, 10 people, one by one, waving at the camera), but it's crucial when editing a sequence (two people shaking hands, for instance). Choose shots in which your subjects are moving or look-

ing in a consistent direction. For example, our coffee drinker might move across the screen from left to right on his way to the coffee pot. When he enters the next shot to pick up the pot, he should come from the left and be moving right. If he comes from the right, you've got a jump cut.

### Rule #6: You can't make a BLT out of chicken salad.

There's a standing rule that underlines all the examples so far: Effective editing depends a lot on thoughtful shooting. As you shoot, consider how you intend to piece the shots together (with establishing shots, close-ups, etc.). Remember to record enough pre-roll so that you can edit the shots, and make sure you get enough cutaways so you can cover the jump cuts that will invariably occur.

Video Review's Accessory Buyer's Guide in the April issue will give a complete rundown on editing controllers, switchers and special-effects generators that can add a much higher level of sophistication to your finished productions. And be sure to check out this issue's "Hands-On" review of the Videonics ProED editing system. But, even without using any additional equipment, these basic editing techniques are enough to help turn your raw video ingredients into an entertaining finished production. □





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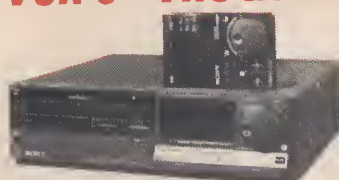
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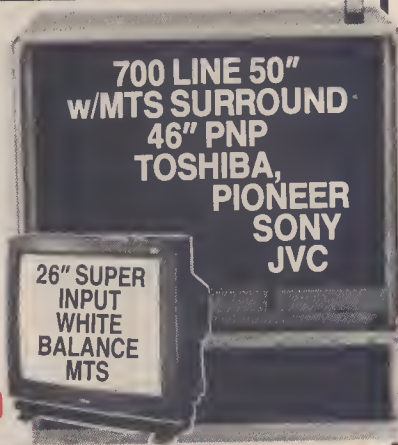
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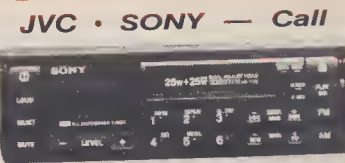
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# Computers meet Camcorders

*Use the power of your PC to liven up video movie images.*

BY HOWARD MILLMAN

If you own a computer and a camcorder and you haven't put them together yet, you have some catching up to do. While video processors and special-effects generators have been taking home videographers closer to the realm of the pros, computers can not only emulate those black boxes, they can put a whole new spin on your video moviemaking.

Before you begin to play with your video images on a computer, you need an image capture board. With this device, images coming from a videocamera (motion or still), camcorder or VCR are captured and then held in the board's memory—much like freeze-frames on a digital-effects VCR. Most image capture boards have manuals that facilitate attachment, but if you're unfamiliar with computers, you can have your board installed by a professional. After you've got the image board in place, you'll need some software to generate effects and manipulate the images. From there, your computer software mounts the image on the monitor, just as an artist mounts his or her canvas on an easel.

Most image capture boards have built-in genlocks, which sync up different kinds of video signals—in this case, the NTSC signal of your video source with the RGB computer signal. Genlocks let you superimpose computer-generated special effects onto moving video or transfer your single-frame manipulated images back onto tape.

What's the point of manipulated single images for your home video? There are quite a few: title backgrounds, for example, using scenes from your home program; or attractive graphics for scene transitions. You could even build up an entire tape "art gallery" of surreal, comic or merely dazzling pictures. And while these pictures can originate in your VCR or camcorder, they don't have to. Image capture boards also let you play with images from "clip art" software discs or with images you draw yourself with art programs.

Let's look at three popular systems—IBM and compatibles, the Apple Macintosh and the Amiga—and examine one capture board for each system, as well as various pieces of software.

## IBM and Compatibles

There are many image capture boards available for IBM PCs and compatible models. One we're particularly partial to is the ATronics Professional Image Board + (PIB+ for short). It offers standardized video inputs and outputs and comes equipped with an input cable that hooks into a color computer monitor.

The PIB+ captures and stores one or two live color images from a camera or VCR and displays it on a monitor. Of course, if you choose to store two images on the board, image resolution decreases: from 512x512 square pixels to 512x256 square pixels. No matter how many images you choose to store, the PIB+ can capture them at a very fast  $1/60$  of a second. Then they can be enhanced by using any of 1,000 options, depending on your software.

The board contains a half-megabyte of random access memory (RAM), which can hold one full-screen color image in 512x512 resolution or two in 512x256 resolution.

The PIB+ comes with the Halovision III (H/V3) program, a fairly basic special-effects generator and editor for color swapping, mosaics, tinting, and moving and generating text.

Three other packages come with the board, two of which are very useful. The first, **PIB Image**, is a streamlined (thus easier to use) program that retrieves, edits and saves captured images. It includes printer drivers for numerous color and laser printers. The second, **VImage**, lets you display the captured image on higher-resolution monitors.

ATronics also supports V\_Graph's **VirtualVideo Producer**, which incorporates some high-powered special

## FACT FINDER

### IBM Products

Product: Professional Image Board + (PIB+)  
Manufacturer: ATronics Int'l. Inc., 1830 McCandless Dr.,  
Milpitas, CA 95035, (408) 942-3344  
Price: \$1,295

Product: VirtualVideo Producer  
Manufacturer: V\_Graph Inc., P.O. Box 105,  
Westtown, PA 19395, (215) 399-1521  
Prices: \$795 (PIB), \$995 (PIB+)

### Mac II Products

Product: PhotoMac, QuickCapture, ColorCapture boards  
Manufacturer: Data Translation Inc., 100 Locke Dr.,  
Marlboro, MA 01752, (800) 522-0265  
Prices: \$695, \$1,595 and \$2,995, respectively

Product: Studio/B  
Manufacturer: Electronic Arts, 1820 Gateway Dr.,  
San Mateo, CA 94404, (415) 571-7171  
Price: \$495

### Amiga Products

Product: Deluxe Paint II  
Manufacturer: Electronic Arts  
Price: \$130

Products: PIXmate, ProGen, FrameGrabber  
Manufacturer: Progressive Peripherals, 464 Kalamath,  
Denver, CO 80204, (303) 825-4144  
Prices: \$70, \$450 and \$700, respectively

Suggested list prices are rounded off to the nearest dollar.



effects. Its powerful professional features include 14 different wipes in 10 speeds, straight line animation, 100 different fonts for text, and foreign language characters.

On-line and manual tutorials make the programs fairly easy to get started on. It'll be a long time before you exhaust all the possibilities the PIB+ programs provide.

The PIB+ is also compatible with more than a dozen other programs. These deliver features that enable you to compress the captured image (which saves hard-disc space and line charges when transmitting graphics to a remote system), enhance printouts and produce slide shows or animation sequences.

## Apple Mac II/IIx

Apple computers, particularly those in the Macintosh line, have long been known for their strong graphics and ease of use—qualities that make them well suited for desktop video. Data Translation makes an impressive image capture board for the Mac. Called **ColorCapture**, the board can capture and display video images (one at a time or in single freeze-frames) at a rate of  $1/30$  of a second and display these images continuously. A particularly exciting feature on the board is its "zoom-pan-scroll" capability, which lets you zoom in on specific regions of a single image for detail work.

The board's convenient cable has three conventional video inputs with BNC connectors (the type used in professional video production; RCA/BNC converters can be bought at most sophisticated electronics stores). Images can be displayed on a high-resolution RGB monitor or on a regular TV with video input jacks.

The board stores one full-color image in 640x480 resolution. It's compatible with the Mac II's eight-bit monitor and video card, and, with **PhotoMac** software, it emulates higher-resolution 24-bit color images. That means 32,768 gradations of hue.

Data Translation distributes PhotoMac for further manipulation of your captured image. A menu-driven, fully compatible interactive software package, PhotoMac offers recoloring (your choice of 16,000,000 colors, but who's counting), resizing, reversing, rotating, cutting and pasting, copy moving, flipping, decoloring, selective masking and nine levels of the aforementioned zoom. A videotape tutorial gently introduces you to PhotoMac's many wonders.

For riveting special effects, investigate Electronic Arts' professional paint program, **Studio/8**. This eight-disc set includes dozens of features to manipulate captured, cribbed or created images in literally hundreds of ways.

## Amiga

The good news about Commodore Amiga computers (the 500 and the 2500, particularly) is that the company behind them is taking an aggressive stance in the emerging camcorder/computer link-up market. The two models are specifically geared to the needs of video moviemakers. The not-so-good news: While the ATronics and Data Translation expansion cards for IBM and Apple hardware contain the essential onboard genlocks, the Amiga requires an external genlock.

Solution: Progressive Peripherals' broadcast-quality **ProGen**, which works with the Amiga RS-170A. ProGen is paired with a spartan image-retrieval software package. Commodore also offers a genlock of its own, the A2300. Both have conventional RCA jacks. We'd opt for either of these; other genlocks vary considerably in price and quality. Less expensive ones sometimes tend to bleed colors and have a difficult time reproducing them accurately.

For image capture, another of Progressive's products, **FrameGrabber**, offers front-panel controls for intensity, hue and saturation. This allows you to perform instant corrections as it captures the image. With its 384K of onboard RAM, the FrameGrabber stores one full-color image in memory.

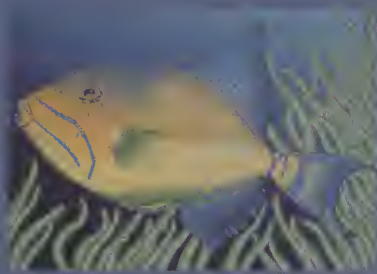
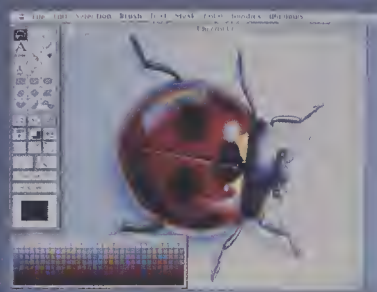
The FrameGrabber's somewhat limited software can perform one nifty trick: It can replay the captured image in a controlled time-lapse mode to simulate animation.

*Continued on page 90*



Above: **Deluxe Paint II** (for Amiga) from Electronic Arts lets you swing from the Eiffel Tower (image created by Avril Harrison).

## Use Color Masks



Top right: Abraham Lincoln's image can be flipped, altered and windowed for comparison, using **PIXmote** (for Amiga) from Progressive Peripherals. Above: The **ATronics Professional Image Board** + allows you to sample an image, such as on airplane, and includes its own software to change colors, add patterns or otherwise tweak the image. Left: The ladybug began as a digitized image on paper (by artist M. Dionnet) and has been screened using **Studio/8** software. The fish (by Susan Kare) was also created using **Studio/8**.

Below and right: Data Translation's **ColorCapture** Board, in tandem with **PhotoMac** software, lets you sample different hair colors.



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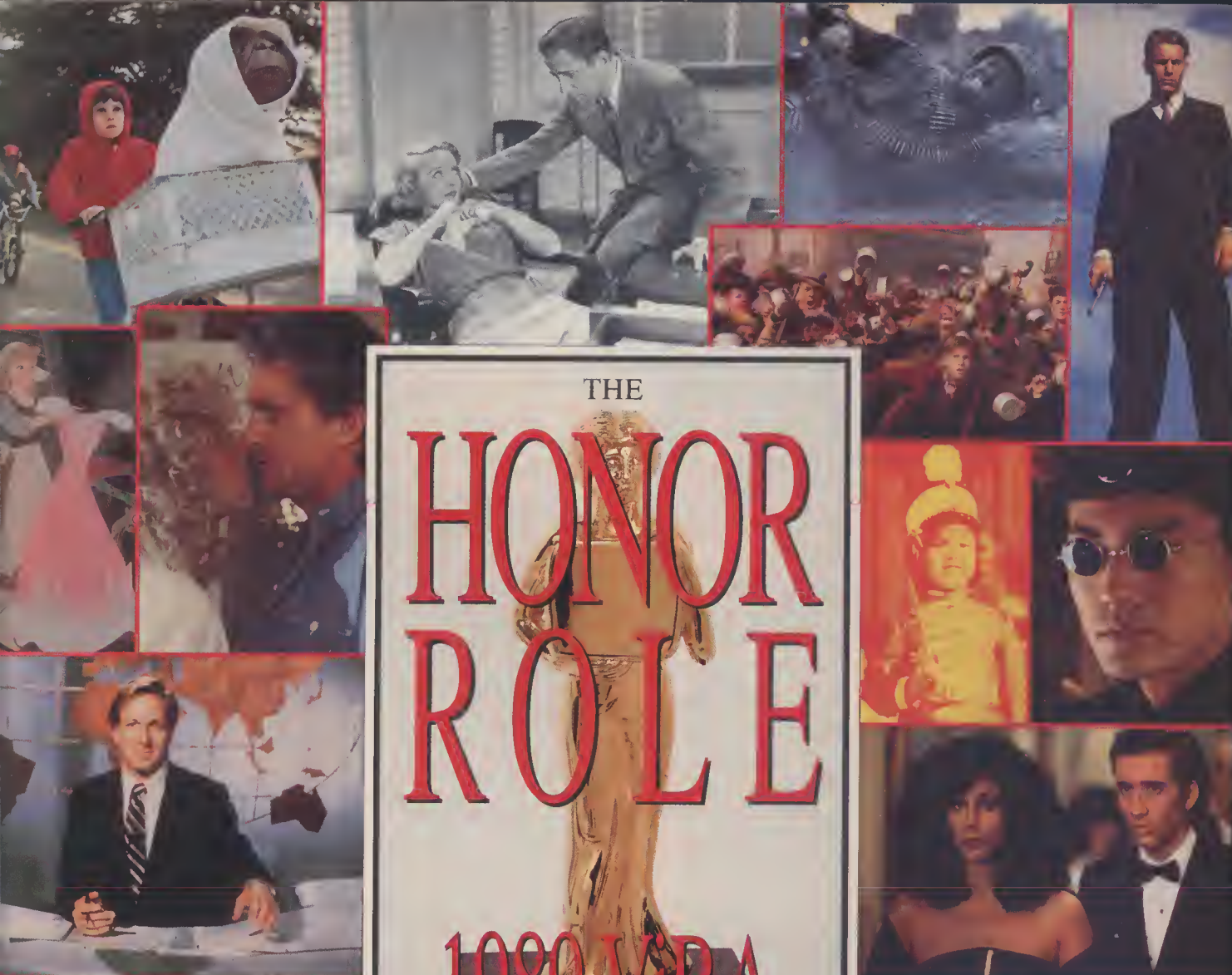
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THE  
**HONOR  
 ROLE**  
 1989 ViRA  
**NOMINEES**

**I**t wasn't just best-selling, record-breaking *E.T.* that came home in 1988. The pageantry and mystery of China's Forbidden City, an English child's odyssey through the war-torn Orient, Cher's lunar love affair and the return of Eliot Ness and his gang busters all were highlights of a banner year for movies on home video. And let's not forget all the wonderful tapes and discs of movie classics, music, comedy performances, documentaries, kid vid and health and fitness programs released last year.

As we have since 1981, we will honor the best of the past year with our annual ViRAs, the *Video Review Awards*—the only major critical awards in the video field

and the highest accolade of video excellence.

The 1989 nominees in 23 categories are listed on the following two pages. To be eligible, a title must have been released on videocassette or laser disc between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 1988. All 1988 releases that received four-star reviews from *VR* critics are automatically nominated. A panel of our critics and editors also nominated a number of three-star titles they felt deserved to be included. All of *VR*'s critics will vote this month on the nominees by secret ballot. The winners will be announced in our May issue and will receive the coveted ViRA statuette at a gala ceremony to be held in Hollywood on March 2.





### BEST ACTION-ADVENTURE MOVIE

Hamburger Hill (*Vestron*)  
The Living Daylights (*CBS/Fox*)  
Red Heat (*IVE*)  
The Untouchables (*Paramount*)



### BEST COMEDY

Baby Boom (*CBS/Fox*)  
Broadcast News (*CBS/Fox*)  
Hairspray (*RCA/Columbia*)  
Housekeeping (*RCA/Columbia*)  
Living on Tokyo Time (*Charter*)  
The Milagro Beanfield War (*MCA*)  
Moonstruck (*MGM/UA*)  
Planes, Trains and Automobiles (*Paramount*)  
Throw Momma from the Train (*Orion*)  
The Witches of Eastwick (*Warner*)  
Withnail and I (*Media*)



### BEST THRILLER

Best Seller (*Vestron*)  
Cop (*Paramount*)  
Fatal Attraction (*Paramount*)  
Jack's Back (*Paramount*)  
The Manchurian Candidate (*MGM/UA*)  
No Way Out (*HBO*)  
Off Limits (*CBS/Fox*)  
Stakeout (*Touchstone*)



### BEST HORROR MOVIE

American Gothic (*Vidmark*)  
The Blob (*RCA/Columbia*)  
Brain Damage (*Paramount*)  
It's Alive III: Island of the Alive (*Warner*)  
Monkey Shines (*Orion*)

### BEST DRAMA

Da (*Virgin*)  
The Dunera Boys (*Prism*)  
Empire of the Sun (*Warner*)  
Fat City (*RCA/Columbia*)  
Full Metal Jacket (*Warner*)  
Hope and Glory (*Nelson*)  
The Last Emperor (*Nelson*)  
Matewan (*Lorimar*)  
Maurice (*Lorimar*)



Nuts (*Warner*)  
Platoon (*HBO*, now available from *Vestron*)  
Shy People (*Warner*)  
Stand and Deliver (*Warner*)  
The Unbearable Lightness of Being (*Orion*)  
Wall Street (*CBS/Fox*)  
The Whales of August (*Nelson*)



### BEST SCI-FI OR FANTASY MOVIE

E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial (*MCA*)  
Innerspace (*Warner*)  
The Princess Bride (*Nelson*)  
Willow (*RCA/Columbia*)

### BEST CLASSIC MOVIE (pre-1960)

The Big Parade (*MGM/UA*)  
Fighting Devil Dogs (*Republic*)  
Great Expectations (*Paramount*)  
Hamlet (*Paramount*)  
Henry V (*Paramount*)  
The Incredible Shrinking Man (*MCA*)  
Love Me or Leave Me (*MGM/UA*)  
The Mysterious Dr. Satan (*Republic*)  
Oliver Twist (*Paramount*)  
Poor Little Rich Girl (*Playhouse*)  
Quartet (*Axon*)

### BEST RESTORED CLASSIC

Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ (*MGM/UA*)  
The Big Trail (*Key*)  
Marked Woman (*MGM/UA*)  
October (*Evergreen International*)

### BEST VINTAGE TV

The Outer Limits: Demon with a Glass Hand (*MGM/UA*)  
TV's Best Adventures of Superman, Vols. 3 & 4 (*Warner*)  
The Best of Abbott and Costello Live (*Warner*)

### BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

Bugs Bunny Superstar (*MGM/UA*)  
Cinderella (*Walt Disney*)  
Pinocchio and the Emperor of the Night (*New World*)  
The Puppetoon Movie (*Family Home Entertainment*)



### BEST FOREIGN-LANGUAGE MOVIE

The Battle of Algiers (*Axon*)  
Cesar and Rosalie (*Axon*)  
Fellini Satyricon (*MGM/UA*)  
Jean de Florette (*Orion*)  
Manon of the Spring (*Orion*)  
My Life as a Dog (*Paramount*)  
1900 (*Paramount*)  
Shoot the Piano Player (*Connoisseur*)  
Stray Dog (*Sony*)



### BEST DOCUMENTARY

Alicia (*Video Artists International*)  
Maria: A Film About Maria Callas (*Video Artists International*)  
Nova: Einstein (*Vestron*)  
That Memorable Year: 1963 (*Media Access*)  
Vernon, Florida (*RCA/Columbia*)  
West Side Story: The Making of the Recording (*Deutsche Grammophon/Polygram*)

Nominees shown in photos on previous page (clockwise from top left): E.T.; Marked Woman; Full Metal Jacket; Empire of the Sun; The Untouchables; Poor Little Rich Girl; The Last Emperor; Moonstruck; Broadcast News; Cinderella; Fatal Attraction. On these pages (clockwise from top left): Nuts; Red Heat; Innerspace; Brideshead Revisited; The Reluctant Dragon; The Firm Aerobic Workout with Weights, Vol. 2; 16 Days of Glory, Part II; Celebrating Bird: The Triumph of Charlie Parker; Penn & Teller's Cruel Tricks for Dear Friends; Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll; My Life as a Dog; Best Seller; and Hairspray.



**BEST SERIES  
OR COLLECTION**

The Adventures of Superman,  
Vols. 1 to 3 (*Bridgestone*)  
Brideshead Revisited (*Virgin*)  
Matinee at the Bijou, Vols. 1 to 4  
(*Hollywood Select*)  
The Olympiad Series (*Paramount*)  
The Thin Man Series (*MGM/UA*)

**BEST INTERACTIVE  
OR SPECIAL  
FEATURES DISC**

An American Tail (*MCA*)  
A Night at the Opera (*Criterion*)  
Scaramouche (*Criterion*)  
Singin' in the Rain (*Criterion*)  
2001: A Space Odyssey (*Criterion*)  
The Wizard of Oz (*Criterion*)

**BEST MUSIC—  
ROCK OR POP**

The All-Star Reggae Session  
(*HBO*)  
The Cure in Orange (*Elektra*)  
Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll (*MCA*)  
Roy Orbison and Friends:  
A Black and White Night (*HBO*)  
Sign o' the Times (*MCA*)  
Storytelling Giant (*Warner*)  
Van Morrison in Ireland (*Jem*)  
A Vision Shared (*CBS Music*)

**BEST KID VID**

A Child's Christmas  
in Wales (*Vestron*)  
Family Circle Presents Storyland  
Theater, Vols. 1 to 4 (*Paperback*)  
Mickey and the Beanstalk  
(*Walt Disney*)

Raffi in Concert with  
the Rise and Shine Band (*A&M*)  
The Reluctant Dragon  
(*Walt Disney*)  
The Three Fishketeers  
(*Family Home Entertainment*)

**BEST  
COMEDY  
PERFORMANCE**

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(*HBO*)  
Penn & Teller's Cruel Tricks  
for Dear Friends (*Lorimar*)  
The Roseanne Barr Show  
(*HBO*)  
Victor Borge  
(*Gurtman & Murtha*)  
The Young Comedians All-Star  
Reunion (*HBO*)

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**BEST HOW-TO**

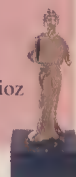
Dr. Heimlich's Home  
First Aid Video (*MCA*)  
Lee Trevino's Priceless  
Golf Tips (*Paramount*)  
Gymnastics Fun (*Vestron*)

**BEST  
SPORTS**

Visions of Eight (*Axon*)  
16 Days of Glory, Part II  
(*Paramount*)  
Snow Motion (*Nelson*)

**BEST MUSIC—  
CLASSICAL**

Bernstein/Mahler Symphony  
No. 2 (*Deutsche  
Grammophon/Polygram*)  
Carlos Kleiber/Beethoven  
Symphonies Nos. 4 & 7  
(*Philips/Polygram*)  
Glenn Gould: A Portrait  
(*Kultur*)  
Rubinstein in Concert  
(*London/Polygram*)  
Solti/Wagner and Berlioz  
(*London/Polygram*)

**BEST CD-V**

Robert Cray: Smoking Gun  
(*Mercury/Polygram*)  
Madonna: Papa Don't Preach (*Sire*)

# REVIEWS

## LATEST MOVIES

### DIE HARD ★★☆☆

Bruce Willis, Alan Rickman, Alexander Godunov, Bonnie Bedelia, William Atherton. Directed by John McTiernan. 1988. Rated R. (CBS/Fox cassette, 132 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.98)

BY ANDREW SARRIS

*Die Hard* is about as effective a piece of explosive entertainment as is possible to imagine—with an \$80-million theatrical gross to rank it among the year's biggest hits. The video version loses little but the



Willis: a tough day at the office.

experience (exhilarating to some) of being in the middle of hundreds of screaming, cheering moviegoers.

Frankly, a little bit of bang-bang goes a long way with me, but why should I rain on someone else's parade just because I usually look for more logic, feeling and plain common sense in movies. If I were really in a bad mood, I might observe that *Die Hard* cheats on its politics and encourages mindless anarchy by taking broad swipes at the police brass, the FBI and, above all, the media in the sniveling per-

son of Atherton as a TV reporter with the instincts of a vulture and the morals of a weasel. I might also complain that after the stylish villains (notably Rickman and Godunov) have spent two hours telling us how brilliant they are, they unveil a Mickey Mouse escape plan that wouldn't fool Mortimer Snerd. But one might as well complain that *Murder, She Wrote* isn't Chekhov. So if audience orgasms are inevitable, let's all sit back and enjoy them. That's exactly what I did here.

The greatest pleasure in *Die Hard* is watching a hideously huge skyscraper in California being blown up in a titanic battle between a band of international pseudoterrorists out for the big bucks and a lone cop (Willis) who ends up making Rambo look like a wimp. The screenplay by Jeb Stuart and Steven E. De Souza is not without its smarts in the tangled web of multinational corporations and computer technology. But the major *auteur* of the movie is visual-effects wizard Richard Edlund along with his army of F/X specialists.

Almost all the action takes place in a

mythologically modernist office building that seems to have a writhing life of its own, with its miles of cables, its ever accessible, ever vulnerable facade of night-lit glass and its fun-house mirrored interiors—all the better to be smashed to smithereens amid the incredibly prolonged clatter of the most advanced automatic weapons. Both the hero and the villains seem to have graduate degrees in every method of detonating high explosives.

Oh, yes, the Willis character starts out with a vague desire to spend Christmas with his estranged wife (Bedelia) and child. Strangely, his wife never becomes the crucial hostage you keep expecting her to become. The movie cheats on its own premises by keeping you on the edge of your seat without making you worry about difficult moral choices. But, ultimately, it is all harmless enough and nerve jangling enough—and what else matters? The biggest irony is that the movie started out with an ad campaign that played down Willis' part in the picture because the research honchos had discovered from their polling samples that people were tired of Willis. The smash-hit status of *Die Hard* has since upped his asking price to somewhere between Mars and Venus.

## BRUCE WILLIS: MOONLIGHTING

When the script for *Die Hard* was being shopped around Hollywood, people dismissed the project as *Rambo Trapped in the Towering Inferno*. Both Clint Eastwood and Richard Gere turned down the lead role of a cop who becomes the only hope for hostages (including his ex-wife) being held by international terrorists in an L.A. high rise. Bruce Willis hoped the \$5 million that 20th Century-Fox paid him to do *Die Hard* would ease the sting of his last boxoffice bomb, *Sunset*. Craig Moddero talked with Willis for VR.

VR: How important is *Die Hard* to you?

WILLIS: If an actor can star in an action film and be convincing to an audience, then he can do other types of films and then return to an action picture because the public has accepted him as a hero in that genre. After *Sunset*, I knew I had to make the type of movie that an audience could relate to. The problem with *Sunset* was that today's audience has no idea who Tom Mix was. *Blind Date* [his debut feature] was very easy for people to identify

with. But I wanted to try something new and see if people would accept me. One of the many reasons *Die Hard* works is that audiences understand how ruthless and crazy terrorists are. They also understand what it's like to be trapped in a tall building.

VR: Did you do many of your own stunts in the movie?

WILLIS: As much as they would let me. But when you stand on the penthouse patio of a high rise late at night and look down, you become best friends instantly with your stunt double [laughs]. Actually I did the stunt where I jump off the roof after you see a huge hall of fire. I also did a lot of the close action in my fight scenes.

VR: What affect did becoming a celebrity with TV's *Moonlighting* have on you?

WILLIS: Celebrity created a lot of fear in me. And when you're afraid, you don't want anyone to know you're afraid. I lived through—which has been overblown in the press—a "three-year debauchery of bachelorhood and





*Sarandon, Costner: a new ball game.*

### **BULL DURHAM ★★★★★**

Kevin Costner, Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins. Directed by Ron Shelton. 1988. Rated R. (Orion cassette, 108 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.98)

**BY RICHARD SCHICKEL**

The next time you stand for the seventh-inning stretch, spare a kindly thought for Crash Davis (Costner), who, in his crotchety way, loves baseball both better and less wisely than the rest of us do. What would the beloved game be without guys like him, exemplars of its lore, students of its stylizations?

An aging catcher and a perpetual minor leaguer, whose brain exceeds his talents,

*Richard Schickel is a critic for Time and the writer of recent TV documentaries on Vincente Minnelli and Cary Grant.*

## **AT THE MOVIES**

drinking." The truth is I was in a four-year relationship and was only single for a brief time before I got married. But that's what they focused on because that's what sells magazines.

**VR:** What has your marriage to actress Demi Moore taught you?

**WILLIS:** She's made me laugh at things a lot more. My life is now full of love and warmth—genuine love from my wife, who's been through the tabloid traumas on her own. She tells me not to get upset because most people are going to pay more attention to the other story next to mine—about the talking bear from outer space landing in Yosemite.

**VR:** What do you watch on your VCR?

**WILLIS:** Movies by my heroes like Robert De Niro and the Three Stooges. Films that Demi and I missed in the theaters. Now that we've just had a baby girl, we're starting to think about watching all the Disney classics with our kid. Right now I'm enjoying acting for fun and being a family man for real. □

he is sent down from Triple A to the Durham Bulls of the Carolina League because the organization believes he's just the man to smarten up and steady down a rookie phenom named Calvin LeLouch (Robbins, in one of the past year's best comic performances). The kid is a pitcher with "a million-dollar arm and a five-cent head," whose sole idea is to throw "heat" past every batter he faces. Between them comes Annie Savoy (Sarandon), who is unbalanced in exactly the opposite way from Calvin. She overintellectualizes the game. And sex, too. Though she is drawn to Crash, it is the kid she at first ties to her bed (so he'll hold still while she reads him Walt Whitman) and then pumps full of giddy mysticism. She and Crash yearn long and hard for each other, but they don't get together until he's taught the kid how to throw a curve and she's taught him to breathe through his eyelids.

The imposition of this triangle on the diamond doings of a bush-league season makes *Bull Durham* not only one of the best romantic comedies in recent memory, but possibly the most satisfying baseball movie ever made. Writer-director Shelton is himself a former minor-league player (and part owner of the real Durham Bulls). He has a wicked, affectionate ear not merely for locker-room and dugout dialogue, but also for the way our heroes might conduct their mating rituals, and he has a bemused but never patronizing eye for bush-league ball, American provincial life and post-modern sexuality.

Baseball at this level is not spectacle. It has a humanity, a connection with ordinary life, that is harder to find in "the show," as the Bulls refer to the major leagues, where, as Crash says, the ball parks are like cathedrals. Of course, Shelton forces things up for comic and dramatic purposes, but his movie never loses touch with the eccentric realities of his chosen landscape. If Preston Sturges had ever made a baseball movie, it might have turned out something like this one, which imagines, and makes us believe, that a minor-league catcher could have an opinion—and an intelligent one at that—about Susan Sontag's attempts at fiction.

### **THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING ★★★★★**

Daniel Day Lewis, Juliette Binoche, Lena Olin. Directed by Philip Kaufman. 1988. Rated R. (Orion cassette, 172 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.98) □

**BY LEONARD MALTIN**

It's rare that an adaptation of a novel pleases both those who have read it and those who haven't. It's rarer still when a movie can be said to have all the qualities of a good novel. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* achieves this, in exemplary fashion. It also qualifies as the most foreign American movie I've ever seen. If it weren't for director (and co-scripter) Kaufman's name at the top of the credits and the fact that the movie is in English, you'd probably never guess that it *is* American-made. To be sure, it is based on the novel by Czechoslovakia's Milan Kundera and was filmed in Europe with a mostly European cast. The distinctive eye of Swedish cinematographer Sven Nykvist controls its images. And the movie flies directly in the face of any number of Hollywood conventions. It's long (nearly three hours). It's cast almost entirely with unknowns. It values silence as much as dialogue. It is sensual and erotic without being exploitative. It is political.

If I had to describe this movie in one word, it would be "hypnotic." Watching it again on video, I found myself absolutely riveted to the screen, quite willing to enter into this long, often difficult journey all over again. The story is about a talented young surgeon with an insatiable appetite for women who finds himself caught up in the political upheavals of Prague in 1968. At the same time, he must choose between his long-held lifestyle of non-commitment and his love of a naive but passionate young woman.

The cast that brings this story to life is impeccable. I'd never seen either of the leading ladies, Binoche or Olin, but it's

*Leonard Maltin is a regular on TV's Entertainment Tonight and author of the bestselling TV Movies & Video Guide.*

*Sex and politics: Lewis and Binoche make Being more bearable.*



not likely that I'll ever forget them. As for Lewis, this chameleonlike actor (*Room with a View*, *My Beautiful Laundrette*) once again manages to disappear into his role, with no residue of any previous performance to color our thinking about the character he's playing.

This is an altogether extraordinary picture—actually more an experience than a movie. I'm happy to report that the experience is preserved intact on video.

## PASCALI'S ISLAND ★★★★★

Ben Kingsley, Charles Dance, Helen Mirren. Directed by James Dearden. 1987. Rated PG-13. (IVE cassette, 106 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$89.95)

BY ANDREW SARRIS

The year is 1908. The place is a Greek island in the Aegean occupied by the Turks. Pascali (Kingsley) is one of the Ottoman Empire's far-flung spies. For 20 years he has been posted on the island with a monthly remittance—and for 20 years he has been writing voluminous dispatches to the authorities in Constantinople. When an Englishman (Dance) arrives on the island, ostensibly on an archaeological mission, Pascali offers his services as an interpreter and guide. The Englishman establishes a liaison with a British woman artist (Mirren), who, like everyone else in the movie, is not what she seems.

Andrew Sarris is professor of film at Columbia University and a critic for *The Village Voice*.

Kingsley: eyeing more than a sunset.



Depicting a turn-of-the-century world in which time is running out, writer-director Dearden has cast a spell worthy of Lawrence Durrell's intoxicating prose in *The Alexandria Quartet*. Actually, *Pascali's Island* is based on a novel by Barry Unsworth. By contemporary standards, its narrative is so tightly constructed that it seems at times a bit contrived. Fortunately, the movie's three principals are so ideally cast that they float through their roles with dreamlike conviction. Kingsley is brilliant as the point-of-view protagonist with a discreet passion for young boys. Dance and Mirren are tantalizingly casual as the two lovers, and Mirren's elaborately draped nudity becomes an *objet d'art* in its own right as an analog to the exquisite Greek statue that precipitates the story's final tragedy.

The compelling subtext of the movie is the allegorical parallel between a spy who wonders if his superiors ever read his reports and a writer who wonders if the public reads his work. But both the text and the subtext are suffused with the mystery and sunlit magic of the Aegean, as three charismatic personalities act out their roles for the last time as the curtain goes down on their privileged world before the Great War. In strictly visual terms, it is the sun that literally sets before Pascali's grieving eyes at the picture's end. Despite the cramped framing of the videocassette version, *Pascali's Island* retains the emotional power of the big-screen original.

## THE PRESIDIO ★★★

Sean Connery, Mark Harmon, Meg Ryan, Jack Warden. Directed by Peter Hyams. 1988. Rated R. (Paramount cassette, 97 min., Hi-Fi stereo, no list price)

BY ROGER GREENSPUN

It would be simpler if *The Presidio* were two movies. One of them you'd like for being clever, literate, sexy, tense and sometimes full of honest feeling. The other you could just forget—except that it provides the suspense plot and the formulaic murder mystery that keeps the first movie going. The good movie offers

## ABOUT THESE REVIEWS

To parallel the viewing environment of most home viewers, VR critics normally review programs in their homes. Unless otherwise indicated: all tapes are SP; all LV discs are EP. All programs are in color unless marked B&W. □ indicates closed captions for the hearing-impaired; DS indicates Dolby Surround sound.

- ★ ★ ★ ★ OUTSTANDING
- ★ ★ ★ GOOD
- ★ ★ AVERAGE
- ★ BELOW AVERAGE



Harmon-ic pursuit in *The Presidio*.

private lives, personalities and fun. The other offers an all but faceless gang of thieves, deadly when they get around to business, but dumb.

Ostensibly, they smuggle diamonds. But what they really do is drop clues. A bullet here, a cocktail coaster there, fresh paint on an old car, too much water in a potted palm—you can tick them off as in a parlor game, right up to the shattering, albeit conventional, climax. This may strike some as awful, but it does leave time and lots of energy for chases, fights, love and friendship—what must actually matter to anyone watching *The Presidio*.

Connery is the San Francisco Army post's top cop, its provost. Harmon, who plays his former subordinate, is now a civilian city detective who hates Connery's guts but loves his daughter (Ryan). The murder investigation they share sparks a romance, promotes a reconciliation and, along the way, provides plenty of spectacle to balance the even more interesting stuff of human relations.

The rhythm of the movie's chases, exhilarating and genuinely inventive, is in itself a pleasure. I can't recall another recent movie so aware of how and when to move into physical action. But *The Presidio* comes off best in its performances, especially the provocative and not-so-well-known quantity of Ryan. Other pluses: the sharp dialogue and the precise feeling for ensemble among the leads. All this (unlike the chases) loses nothing in the transfer from the theater's wide screen to video.

Roger Greenspun has been a critic for *Penthouse* and *The New York Times*, and now teaches film at Columbia and Rutgers.





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## PHANTASM II ★★

James Le Gros, Reggie Bannister, Angus Scrimm. Directed by Don Coscarelli. 1988. Rated R. (MCA cassette, 97 min., Hi-Fi stereo, DS, \$89.95)

BY JIM FARBER

What a difference a decade makes. When Coscarelli made his first *Phantasm* movie in '79, he had lots of original ideas but no idea what to do with them. Somewhere between then and *Phantasm II*, he obviously learned a lot. His follow-up stands as one of the few modern horror movies with its own vision, its own evil iconography.

This time Coscarelli's complications are defined enough and supported by enough tension to add intrigue rather than confusion. His form is much tighter and he even pulls off an added twist—a set of telepathic heroes. Besides Coscarelli's greater narrative assurance, the significantly heightened production budget helps here. MCA obviously thought enough of the first *Phantasm*'s cult audience to pour in major bucks this time.

But just as the low budget of the first was no excuse for the depth of its problems, the high budget here would mean nothing without the treasure of Coscarelli's newfound imagination. The sets, especially the mazelike marble hallways that dominate the evil crematorium, are chillingly otherworldly, and all the gore effects are creatively repugnant. Also, this time the brain-sucking, metallic ball introduced in the first movie is used more generously, though never gratuitously. Best of all is the movie's final flourish of events—at once witty, tense and horrifying. It's a complicated windup to be sure, but one that allows Coscarelli the chance to create something rare in modern horror: a true sense of chaos.

## TIGER WARSAW ★★★

Patrick Swayze, Barbara Williams, Lee Richardson, Mary McDonnell, Piper Laurie. Directed by Amin Q. Chaudhri. 1988. Rated R. (Sony cassette, 92 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$89.95)

BY BERT WECHSLER

We're in a town where the buildings on Main Street are all three stories tall. Enter Swayze, a man with a past. He left town 15 years before, and now he's back with a fancy car but no visible means of support. Nobody wants to see him—not his family, not his friends, only an old flame who wants to sleep with him. She does. Before we know it, we're 45 minutes into the movie and we're not sure what's happening. She shaves his beard. He gets a job.

Bert Wechsler also reviews for the New York Daily News.



Tiger's Swayze: surprise punch.

And so it goes until, in a few unexpectedly powerful scenes, *Tiger Warsaw* shatters you with its dramatic climax.

The acting is generally low-key with *Dirty Dancing* star Swayze not so much acting as reacting to the rest of the cast. There's some unneeded confusion fed by a succession of almost subliminal inserts involving the hero's past—and the photography is often too dark, especially for smaller video screens. But stick this one out if you enjoy offbeat dramas. It ends up packing a surprise punch. As Sony's first venture into feature movies, it has more going for it than star Swayze.

## THE GREAT OUTDOORS ★★

John Candy, Dan Aykroyd, Annette Bening, Stephanie Faracy. Directed by Howard Deutch. 1988. Rated PG. (MCA cassette, 91 min., Hi-Fi stereo, DS, \$89.95)

BY JEFFREY LYONS

The ample person of John Candy is, for once, not cast as a lovable, stumbling slob. Here he's a responsible father of two sons who takes his family to a remote resort for a well-deserved vacation. But instead of peace and quiet, he's confronted with his abrasive, fast-talking brother-in-law (Aykroyd), who shows up with his wife and his twin daughters.

Unfortunately, the movie becomes just a series of silly confrontations between Candy and Aykroyd with the latter seeing the natural beauty around him only for its potential for subdivisions and condos. For his part, at least, Candy shows surprising range in his portrayal of the harried but level-headed father. Aykroyd, however, merely plays the same sort of wise guy he played in *Ghostbusters* and *Dragnet*.

All in all, *The Great Outdoors* will modestly entertain viewers who want nothing more than to put their brains on standby for a time.



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## VIBES ★★

Cyndi Lauper, Jeff Goldblum, Julian Sands, Googy Gress, Peter Falk, Michael Lerner. Directed by Ken Kwapis. 1988. Rated PG. (RCA/Columbia cassette, 99 min., Hi-Fi stereo, DS, \$89.95)

BY ANDREW SARRIS

*Vibes* fell through the cracks of theatrical distribution last year by being too gimmicky for the grownups and too witty for the gross-out kiddie market. In her transition from MTV to feature movies, Lauper displays an eccentric acting talent, and Goldblum matches her, offbeat reading for offbeat reading. They generate considerable warmth as the oddest of odd couples.

The plot concerns a scraggly assortment of psychics in search of a mysterious treasure from a lost pre-Inca civilization. They find instead a mysteriously malignant force full of steamy special effects. This nonsense is merely a peg on which to hang a surprising number of clever one-liners and several sequences of hilarious analysis and material involving loony villains with traumatic childhood memories.

Director Kwapis and his scenarists are to be commended for trying to do something extra with distressingly trendy material. How can one not like a movie in which a deranged character wonders aloud why Cary Grant never won an Oscar. Unfortunately, the tone is often



Lauper, Goldblum: oddest couple?

excessively facetious, particularly when Falk decides to camp up his very skimpy characterization as the prime mover of much of the action.

The location footage in Ecuador gives the movie a strangely giddy quality, but Lauper and Goldblum are entertainingly graceful even when the screen is cluttered with tedious spook stuff completely lacking in suspense or excitement. Lauper doesn't really perform during the movie, but she renders a thematically appropriate rock ballad over the seemingly endless closing credits. All in all, there is a sweet

irony in Lauper's personality that might find a place with more realistic movie subjects. As it is, video renters could do a lot worse than check out what this rock star can do with just a touch of pathos and more than a morsel of charm.

## THE THIN BLUE LINE ★★★

David Harris, Randall Adams. Directed by Errol Morris. 1988. Not rated. (HBO cassette, 101 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.99) □

BY NEAL GABLER

When Randall Adams drifted from Ohio to Dallas that November, he couldn't have known he was about to become the victim of a sordid existential drama that's made national headlines. On Thanksgiving weekend, 1976, Adams' car ran out of gas and he accepted a ride from a 16-year-old runaway in a stolen car with a passel of guns and a disposition to use them. By the time the evening was over, a Dallas police officer had been killed by five shots fired point-blank. Within a month, Adams had been charged with the killing. Within six months, he had been sentenced to death.

Neal Gabler, the former co-host of TV's *Sneak Previews*, frequently writes about movies for national publications.

# SLEEPER OF THE MONTH

## THE LIGHTHORSEMEN ★★★

Peter Phelps, Tony Bonner, Bill Kerr, Sigrid Thornton, Anthony Andrews. Directed by Simon Wincer. 1988. Rated PG. (Warner cassette, 115 min., Hi-Fi stereo, DS, \$79.95) □

BY JEFFREY LYONS

*The Lighthorsemen* is a movie that played ever so briefly in its theatrical release last year, got some respectable reviews and then quickly disappeared. Catching up with it on video, I was totally unprepared for what turns out to be a thrilling saga of a regiment of soldiers I'd never previously heard of but which, after watching this exquisite true story, I'll never forget.

The year is 1917 and the battlefield is what was then known as Palestine, where German and Turkish forces are allied against the British and Australians during

Phelps as Aussie rebel: avoiding clichés.



the penultimate year of World War I. Australia has sent its Lighthorsemen, a brigade not of cavalry but of mounted infantry. At first, the movie's deep Aussie accents take a bit of getting used to. And, like a skittish horse in need of some training, the movie needs a bit of rope; give it time to unfold and you'll eventually be completely absorbed.

Phelps portrays a young volunteer who discovers during the horrors of actual combat that he can't bring himself to kill another human being. Here's where I thought *The Lighthorsemen* would become just another clichéd movie about 'fessing up and becoming "a man." But no. His comrades accept him. He transfers to the still-dangerous job of ambulance driver.

There's a subplot involving his love for a nurse, played by Thornton (of *The Man from Snowy River*).

Phelps is a bright new face who brings an innocent quality to his character, a man who realizes warfare is far more than glory and heroism. And how impressive the battle sequences are—with their long shots of artillery, 800 galloping lighthorsemen careening across vast, ancient plains to confront and defeat the enemy, atop horses that haven't tasted a drop of water in days.

Here is a genuine sleeper. Mount up and then hang on!

Jeffrey Lyons is also co-host of TV's *Sneak Previews*.



*The Thin Blue Line*, Errol Morris's documentary account of the case, all but exonerates Adams of the crime. Instead, the runaway, an incorrigible basso-voiced malcontent named David Harris, is implicated. The documentary is largely responsible for a Texas judge's recent decision to recommend a new trial for Adams.

But Morris is after something larger here than the reversal of a possibly innocent man's conviction. For Morris (whose first documentary feature, *Gates of Heaven*, probed the strange phenomenon of pet cemeteries), Adams' case is a metaphor for the warped psyche of American justice—a ritualistic, even atavistic system in which the accused are freighted with symbolic meaning and then punished for the meaning that's been thrust upon them. The police need a suspect, Harris needs a scapegoat, the prosecutors need a conviction, two "eyewitnesses" need the reward. Adams is sacrificed to their needs.

It all has a grim fascination as the drama reaches its inexorable, tragic conclusion. As participant after participant dryly relates his or her role, the interviews are occasionally intercut with stylized reenactments. But by keeping his distance, so to speak, and by overlaying the testimony with an ethereal score by Philip Glass, Morris reaches beyond an indictment of legal process to another, even larger metaphor: the tenuousness of everyone's safety.

Here Adams is an Everyman whose life is shattered by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The thin blue line of law enforcement, proclaims a prosecutor, is the only thing that separates us from anarchy. In this spooky, sensational, entertaining documentary, anarchy prevails.

## YOUNG GUNS ★★

Emilio Estevez, Kiefer Sutherland, Charlie Sheen, Lou Diamond Phillips, Dermot Mulroney. Directed by Christopher Cain. 1988. Rated R. (Vestron cassette, 102 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.98)

## BY ROBERT DIMATTEO

As a movie genre, the western has been presumed dead for a few decades now, yet every so often someone tries to prove it's still alive and healthy. This latest attempt, the first Brat-Pack western, is not likely to convince too many.

Starring a passel of Hollywood's hunkiest new guard, the movie is an action-adventure tale about six scruffy young guys hired as "regulators"—guards who protect the ranch of an English merchant

Robert DiMatteo is also a critic and columnist for United Features Syndicate.

from The Ring (the local mob). When the merchant (played by the elegant Terence Stamp) is killed by mob members and the Law fails to punish the offenders, the regulators seek their own justice.

Partly based on the life of William "Billy" Bonney and on the real-life Lincoln County (New Mexico) Merchant Wars, the movie tries for contemporary relevance—pushing the theme of vigilantism with characters who, according to scriptwriter John Fusco, "find themselves in the sort of situation the Guardian Angels would be in today." But the movie succumbs to casting problems when it tries to market Brat Packers in non-yuppie roles. Apple-cheeked and bright-eyed Estevez is a lik-

able young actor, but he would have a hard time convincing us he is a Guardian Angel, let alone Billy the Kid, his role here.

Faring a little better without being memorable are Sutherland as the best educated of the sextet, Phillips as the most spiritual, Mulroney as the grungiest and Sheen (Estevez's real brother) as the leader. The production design and cinematography add dusty atmosphere (which is somewhat diminished on smaller video screens), as does old-timer Jack Palance's grizzled turn as the regulators' chief nemesis. But the movie leaves one thinking, so what? Call it *The Less-Than-Magnificent Six*.

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## SOMEONE TO LOVE ★★

Orson Welles, Henry Jaglom, Sally Kellerman, Andrea Marcovicci, Oja Kodar, Dave Frishberg, Stephen Bishop. Directed by Jaglom. 1987. Not rated. (Paramount cassette, 110 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$79.95) □

BY ROY HEMMING

Surprise—and three cheers. Here's a movie for the over-35 crowd that's packed with lively ideas, openly shared thoughts and real human feelings—with no screeching chases, gratuitous violence or plot oversimplifications aimed at 12-year-old minds. It's often funny, sometimes sad, frequently heartwarming, determinedly romantic, occasionally cynical, once in a while savage, sometimes glib and silly, yet always engaging. I can't remember the last time I was able to apply *all* those attributes to one movie.

Jaglom's pictures, like Woody Allen's, are, of course, not everyone's goblet of Evian. For some, Jaglom's seriocomic psychodramas (or are they psychoramas?) are merely self-indulgent, sophisticated peep shows that probe Jaglom's own unresolved problems relating to the women and professional colleagues in his life—with a moviecamera replacing an analyst's couch. That may be the premise that gets his scripts started, but, in this case at least, *Someone to Love* goes far beyond any personal confessional and offers a remarkably sharp and on-target overview of intelligent, independent, mostly productive and no longer chronologically "young" individuals who want the security of family or clan but can't seem to settle down successfully on personal levels. Worse, they can't (or won't) commit to mates or would-be mates (shades of their parents' or their own previous "marriage traps"). Yet they are terrified of being alone. Chances are that you'll see more than one or two of your friends (if not yourself) mirrored in the conversations or situations of *Someone to Love*. I certainly did.

For his script, Jaglom has brought together a number of friends (including his *inamorata* Marcovicci and his brother Michael Emil) for roles that are candidly close to their real-life personas. He invites them all to a Valentine's Day party at an abandoned old movie palace and then lets his camera follow their conversations, chitchat, smart repartee, ramblings, rantings, evasions and even outright avoidance of conversation. While much of this is clever and provocative, it's not often very profound until Jaglom's mentor, Welles, joins in for the stunning climax. Sitting in the back of the theater as a sort of *eminence grise*, Welles (in his last screen appearance) pulls together most of what's been going on with some pertinent

socio-historical perspective, involving people in the arts, women's lib, female slavery, the pursuit of happiness and more. It's an unforgettable movie exit for the ex-cinema giant—and it literally gives him the last laugh.

Also memorable is Kellerman in an Oscar-quality scene in which she confronts her mirror image. Welles' long-time, real-life companion, Kodar, also steals a scene or two as a European-bred actress with a tellingly different attitude

from her American counterparts. Marcovicci, Frishberg and Bishop each gets a chance to do a song, and cultural historian (and *VR* reviewer) Miles Kreuger is cast appropriately enough in a brief role as the old theater's caretaker.

*Someone to Love* is not for everyone (teeny boppers will be bored), but it does offer some free-wheeling and pungent glimpses of the middle layer of the Me Generation facing, if only verbally, at least a few present-day realities.



Jaglom with Marcovicci: Exposing uncertainties, warts and all.

## HENRY JAGLOM: CHARACTER ANALYSIS

New York-born writer-director Henry Jaglom believes that home video may well be the greatest thing that's ever happened to the movies. It makes it possible, he says happily, for movies like his to survive without the mass-audience appeal that's necessary for a successful theatrical run nowadays. With video a factor in long-range studio planning as to which scripts get filmed and which don't, an independent, offbeat movie like *Someone to Love* has a real chance now to reach an audience that *will* appreciate it and savor it, just as books are acquired for individual bookshelves. Roy Hemming talked with Jaglom in New York for *VR*.

**VR:** *How much of Someone to Love was scripted and how much was improvised as you went along?*

**JAGLOM:** I worked very hard to create the requirement that you ask that question. I try in all my movies to create the illusion that it's all happening spontaneously. I want the audience never to be quite sure. I've heard people say that when they see one of my movies they feel like they're eavesdropping. Some say it favorably, but some don't like that at all—because it's not the conventional movie experience. I write a structured script, but I cast my actors very closely to the character I want. I don't try to make an actor *become* a part, but rather ask who can I cast that *is* that part? Then, during shooting, I encourage my actors to go on sometimes in their own words *after* we've shot the scene as written. Frequently, when I get to the cutting room—which is where I *really* write my movies—I find that what the actors have given me is so

much better than anything I could write. After all, an actor isn't just a face and a voice, but a whole mind and memory and behavior. I like to dig in to get that. I like to be surprised. If I were a painter, I'd love it when the paint dripped and forced me to find something new and fresh, perhaps to see a tree where there was none before. So, to answer your question, *Someone to Love* is about 50% the original script and 50% created by the actors on the spot.

**VR:** *What about the Orson Welles sequences?*

**JAGLOM:** I would not attempt to write for Orson. He was too brilliant for me to think of ever imposing a character on him. I did that in my first movie, *A Safe Place*, and realized it was a mistake. So this time I just said to him, "Remember the lunch conversation we had a few weeks ago when you talked about women and slavery and such-and-such? Well, that's what I want—that kind of comment." I encouraged him to focus on subjects we had already talked about—and then just let him go. What you have in *Someone to Love* is Welles as Welles. For the last time, sadly.

**VR:** *Have the movies of Italy's Fellini influenced you?*

**JAGLOM:** When Anais Nin wrote about my first movie, she called me the American Fellini. I was in heaven! And then no one else said that. Fellini was a *profound* influence—the idea of looking inwardly, of exposing yourself with all your uncertainties and confusions, warts and all. It's accepted in all the other arts—music, poetry, painting—that you're essentially looking at yourself. But not among moviemakers, oddly enough.



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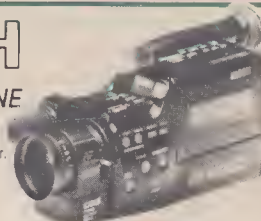
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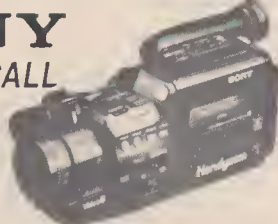
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## LV CLASSICS

### 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY ★★★★★

Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood, William Sylvester, Douglas Rain. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. 1968. Rated G. (Three Criterion LV discs, 149 min. plus untimed additional material, digital stereo, DS, letterboxed, \$124.95)

BY GLENN KENNY

When word of this Criterion disc came our way, it sounded like a video dream come true: a laser disc *2001* in its original widescreen format, in a negative-to-tape transfer supervised personally by the director (who's known to be something of a fussbudget about such things), with the soundtrack digitally reprocessed in six-track Dolby Surround.

Now that I've seen it, I'm certainly not disappointed. But I am a little puzzled. This video transfer of *2001* is absolutely impeccable; all of the movie's strange and beautiful imagery comes through as brilliantly here as it did on theater screens some 20 years ago. The care and sensitivity that went into this version are particularly evident in scenes such as the one in the lunar shuttle (Chapter 12). The interior of the shuttle's cockpit is completely bathed in red light; all-red shots usually come out a mess when subjected to the NTSC video system (take a look at the cassette version of *Aliens* again if you don't believe me). But here they're crisp and clear.

So why am I puzzled? It's because the transfer has been made from a negative that was in *generally* good shape but nonetheless has a number of holes and scratches. Frame 24,488 on side five and frame 1,947 on side six are pertinent examples, although there are more. I can live with these, but I'm sure some people will say they can't, especially for \$125.

The audio, on the other hand, isn't puzzling at all. It's great. The Dolby Sur-

round does an incredible job of putting you *inside* the movie no matter where it goes—from the primitive Dawn of Man scenes to the pristine, sterile environment of the *Discovery* spaceship. Those who found the movie distant ought to experience it in Dolby; they might find it a completely different experience.

As for the movie itself, well, it's been subjected to wheelbarrowfuls of exegesis and interpretation. I'll only add here that to these eyes, it hasn't dated all that badly, and Kubrick and co-screenwriter Arthur C. Clarke now seem prescient rather than cynical when they place a Howard Johnson's restaurant on a space station (although if *2001* were being made today, it might have been a Haagen-Dazs shop). The climactic "trip" section near the end is still hit-and-miss, but some of its images remain potent, removed as they are from the heady lysergic atmosphere of the movie's original release date.

The supplementary materials included on the disc spend a lot of time focusing on Clarke and provide interviews with scientists, as well as some interesting explanations of how the movie's stunning special effects were achieved. In the final analysis, any videophile or cinephile worthy of the name should own this disc.

### THE WIZARD OF OZ ★★★★★

Judy Garland, Ray Bolger, Jack Haley, Bert Lahr, Margaret Hamilton, Frank Morgan. Directed by Victor Fleming. 1939. (Two Criterion LV discs, CAV, digital mono, 102 min. plus untimed additional material, \$99.95)

BY STEVE SIMELS

Considering that this is one of the most widely-seen movies of all time, you can be excused for wondering what Criterion's 50th-anniversary laser disc edition could possibly do—short of unearthing previously unseen footage or (paging Ted Turner) colorizing the picture's Kansas sequences—to justify the set's heftier-than-a-tape price. Well, there's plenty.

For starters, the transfer is a marvel—with gorgeously crisp picture quality and color that seems to leap off the screen. The whole thing looks so real and so, well, textural that it's almost holographic—which is clearly a plus when you consider that *Oz* is, in many ways, a special-effects movie. Criterion's version makes any of the previous generally fine competing tape editions look quite dull by comparison.

The supplementary material included on the disc is, by and large, equally impressive. First off, there's a second audio track with a running narration by film historian Ronald Haver of the Los Angeles County Museum. It's chattily authoritative, although readers of Aljean Harmetz's

bestselling *The Making of the Wizard of Oz* will not find much that's new. At the picture's conclusion there's an interview with Jerry Maren (one of the Munchkin Lollipop Guild kids) and production stills and costume test footage (Hamilton, in full witch's drag, is actually kind of cute). Especially fascinating are Harold Arlen's home movie footage of the deleted song "The Jitterbug" and the cut final chorus of Bolger's "If I Only Had a Brain" (it's terrific, and somebody should re-edit it back into the movie itself). There's also an MGM promo short featuring Buddy Ebsen as the Tin Man before an accident forced him off the picture. As a bonus, there's even an excerpt from a 1925 silent version of the story (with Oliver Hardy) complete with a brief, tantalizing glimpse of an Emerald City set, remarkably faithful to John R. O'Neill's illustrations in the original *Oz* books.

Of course, none of that would matter much if you didn't also get MGM's *The Wizard of Oz*, a classic that's part modern musical, part old-fashioned vaudeville revue, part amusingly sentimental fairy tale, part deadly serious melodrama. Somehow, everything works—you believe that scarecrows can dance and that witches melt, and all the cornball "no place like home" pieties still manage to get to you each time.

### SINGIN' IN THE RAIN ★★★★★

Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, Jean Hagen. Directed by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen. 1952. (Two Criterion LV discs, CAV, 102 min. plus untimed additional material, \$89.95)

### A NIGHT AT THE OPERA ★★★★★

The Marx Brothers, Kitty Carlisle, Allan Jones, Margaret DuMont. Directed by Sam Wood. 1935. (Two Criterion LV discs, CAV, 92 min. plus untimed additional material, \$79.95)

BY ROY HEMMING

Are there any movie buffs who have not seen both of these musical-comedy classics two, three or more times—and loved them just as much each time? But I'm willing to bet that very few have seen them in home-viewing formats this sharp and bright visually, or this clean sonically. And the CAV appendix offers the kind of bonus goodies—original trailers, outtakes, postcards, newsreel footage, excerpts from previous movies that use the same songs, etc.—that only laser disc producers seem to have the imagination to offer.

The second audio track for *Singin' in the Rain* has a lively scene-by-scene commentary by Ronald Haver, which includes historical background about the early talkie



days being spoofed in the screenplay—plus insider-type, scene-by-scene anecdotes of the sort Haver has been collecting for years as a writer and a film curator for the Los Angeles County Museum. Author and TV commentator Leonard Maltin does the same for *A Night at the Opera's* second audio track, although his task is less enviable—for how do you provide sensible yet entertaining commentary when you have the fast-moving madness of the Marxes to deal with? Maltin wisely settles for playing it straight. Since both Haver and Maltin are also *VR* reviewers, I hasten to add that this praise is not a case of editorial logrolling but rather of giving fair and deserving credit where credit is due.

You can be sure I'll keep both of these discs in a convenient spot for instantly changing the tone of gray days.

### DOCTOR ZHIVAGO ★★

Omar Sharif, Julie Christie, Alec Guinness, Ralph Richardson, Tom Courtenay, Geraldine Chaplin. Directed by David Lean. 1965. (Two MGM/UA discs, 201 min., digital stereo, DS, letterboxed, \$49.95)

BY NEAL GABLER

Among David Lean's many virtues as a director, his sense of scale is paramount. Lean paints vast canvases, awesome in their size and studied beauty. Panavision seems to have been invented for him, which makes him the director whose movies would seem least adaptable to video. However large your TV screen, it cannot be large enough, for the sheer monumentality of his movies is so central to the experience of them.

Undaunted nevertheless, MGM/UA has worked manfully and in large part suc-

*Sharif, Christie: Russkie trysty.*



Icon Heston in *Ben-Hur*: restored to full width and six-channel stereo.

cessfully with this new laser disc release to suggest, at least, the scale of Lean's *Doctor Zhivago*. If the effect is a little like finding a neighborhood parish where a Gothic cathedral once stood, it is certainly not for lack of trying. The transfer is clean, crisp and rich. The stereo track is crystalline. And, above all, the shape of Lean's original framing is respected by letterboxing—which (whatever your position on this hotly debated issue) presents the movie as the filmmaker (and God) intended and as the audience originally saw it. In Lean's case, anything else would be unconscionable.

Still, without its Olympian size to overwhelm you, *Zhivago* itself is one of Lean's clunkier pictures—big without also being very deep, lush without being emotionally textured, romantic without being poetic—and its politics run stridently pro-Czarist. The Bolsheviks' worst offense seems to be spoiling Zhivago's bourgeois lifestyle by co-opting his mansion. But whatever the movie's dramatic shortcomings, in this video version it remains remarkably beautiful and decidedly operatic.

### BEN-HUR ★★

Charlton Heston, Stephen Boyd. Directed by William Wyler. 1959. (Two MGM/UA discs, 211 min., digital stereo, DS, letterboxed, \$49.95)

BY GLENN KENNY

Boy, they sure don't make 'em like this anymore. Wyler's *Ben-Hur*, alongside DeMille's 1956 *The Ten Commandments*, epitomizes the '50s ethos of the Really Big Picture—sprawling in scope, virtuosic in production values, shamelessly melodramatic and unabashedly religious. Heston, the implacable icon of this genre, appears here as Judah Ben-Hur in Palestine during the time of Christ. Ben-Hur's adventures take him from prince to pauper to prince and so on. But almost everyone knows

that, of course. What's important is how this new laser disc version differs from what you've seen before.

First off, it has been letterboxed—black bands across the top and bottom parts of the TV screen preserve the original wide-screen picture ratio. And *Ben-Hur*, in keeping with '50s spectacles (which were, we should not forget, designed to give theatergoers something they couldn't get on TV) was a *very* widescreen movie. So in this version, the picture takes up just a little more than a third of the TV screen. That's pretty severe letterboxing—one that even supporters of this practice (myself included) may have a little trouble with. Fortunately, MGM/UA had the good sense to release this version in the disc format, which provides quite a bit more picture detail than conventional VHS. Had the company released it in the VHS format, the letterboxing would have made many of the scenes that contain large amounts of picture detail look smeary. The laser disc version offers picture quality that's about as crisp as you can get in home video today.

The other big difference in this version is the soundtrack, which has been reprocessed in six-channel Dolby Surround. Yowsah! This gives incredible depth to the movie's great action scenes (such as the chariot race and the flooding of the galley) and adds oodles of oomph to Miklos Rozsa's brilliant score.

MGM/UA has obviously tailored this disc set for consumers who have a pretty comprehensive home video setup. Only a big-screen TV and a good surround system will do these laser discs justice. But since the laser disc format has long been a favorite among devoted videophiles, it's probably not assuming too much to posit that there will be a substantial audience for this disc set. This version of *Ben-Hur* is clearly *the* one for serious collectors and connoisseurs.





# CHEAP THRILLS

## BLOODSPORT

Jean Claude Van Damme, Donald Gibb, Forest Whitaker. Directed by Newt Arnold. 1987. Rated R. (Warner cassette, 92 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.95; LV disc, \$24.98)

Van Damme has been touted as Belgium's answer to Arnold Schwarzenegger, and it's tough to see why. He's neither mean nor particularly witty—just a squat, densely packed muscleman with, literally, a kick. His demeanor is actually more analogous to that of the puppylike Mike Tyson. He can't act a lick, but no matter, for *Bloodsport* is primarily just a collection of fight sequences showing off Van

by milking the story's religious imagery for all it's worth, which isn't much; I would recommend therapy rather than moviemaking as an outlet for him. Minor B-icons Clint Howard and Kenneth Tobey make brief, amusing appearances (Howard doing an extremely credible impersonation of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* goon Ed Neal), to little avail. Whatever negative credibility they might bring to *Freeway* is mitigated by its banal, TV-movie head. (Glenn Kenny)

## THE NEST

Robert Lansing, Lisa Langlois, Franc Luz. Directed by Terence H. Winkless. 1988. Rated R. (MGM/UA cassette, 89 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$79.95)

If nothing else, *The Nest* provides everything one could possibly want from a killer-cockroach movie. There's the staid, heroic, island-village sheriff (Luz); his pretty, relit flame (Langlois); her well-meaning if vaguely corrupt mayor-father (Lansing); a beautiful but dangerous mad-scientist type; and a comic-relief, moped-riding exterminator. Did I mention that it's got lots of those household pests going on a rampage? Director Winkless (who co-scripted the original *Howling*) keeps the tone light and pours the outrageous gore on real thick. He even succeeds in promoting the willies in this relatively squirm-proof viewer. *Unbearable Lightness of Being* fans will be disappointed to learn that the anatomically improbable coupling depicted on *The Nest's* cassette box never occurs in the movie. Too bad. (Doug Brod)

## WAXWORK

Zach Galligan, Deborah Foreman, Miles O'Keefe, Patrick Macnee, David Warner. Directed by Anthony Hickox. 1988. Two versions: rated R and unrated. (Vestron cassette, R-rated version: 97 min., unrated version: 100 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.98)

"They'll make a movie about anything these days," says Warner, the proprietor of the titular establishment in this entertaining little time waster—and the picture goes on to prove him right. It seems that several spunky and hormonally inflamed teenagers are disappearing from a local wax museum—not a particularly original premise but



Waxwork mummy: under wraps.

one that enables director Hickox and special-effects wiz Bob Keen to set up several lavishly staged—and rather gory—homages to horror classics of yore. There's also a fairly appalling level of condescension toward the picture's intended teenage audience (the kids portrayed here are, without exception, cretinous, amoral, spoiled, sexist twits), which seems to be a genre convention these days. Still, movie buffs will appreciate the many in-jokes, and the whole thing is well enough made to let you overlook its essential mean-spiritedness. (Steve Simels)

## BLACK ROSES

John Martin, Ken Swofford. Directed by John Fasano. 1988. Rated R. (Imperial cassette, 90 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$79.95)

With its nifty 3-D cassette box, *Black Roses* promises a Freudian brew of hormone-driven heavy metal, monsters from the id and general sexual abandon. But we all know promises are made to be broken. Only three songs are showcased throughout the entire movie, and they lack the visual and aural pyrotechnics we've come to expect from this much-maligned musical genre. However, what *Black Roses*—a demonic band making a play for the teenage souls of

a small town—lacks in material, it attempts to make up for in execution, literally. Unsuspecting hypnotized kids (they'd have to be to listen to these lackluster rock 'n' roll minions of Satan) soon start bumping off their parents in unimaginative ways. Finally, the sequences in which we hope to see the nasty monsters ooze bile turn out to be sadly deficient in the special-effects department. At one point, frantically searching for something to impede a leather-necked creature, Martin shoves a tennis ball down its throat. The monster is so insubstantial that for a moment you wonder if it might actually work. But nothing works in this movie. (John R. Quain)

## LET IT ROCK

Dennis Hopper, David Hess. Directed by Roland Klick. 1981. Rated R. (Media cassette, 75 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$79.95)

For a time in the early '80s, the now-semirespectable Hopper was the Hardest Working Man in International B Movies. *Let It Rock*, originally released elsewhere 'round the globe as *White Star*, is a product of that period, a Berlin-lensed Euro-rock drama about a rambling, near-psychotic manager/promoter and his schemes to get his new charge on the charts (going to such trouble as staging concert riots and assassination attempts). The movie, for the most part, is awful and unconvincing, but it's Hopper you watch. On screen almost 95% of the time, he sweats profusely, grimaces and profanely improvises in a performance that can politely be described as, ahem, *unusual*. In typical Roger Corman fashion—he picked up US distribution rights—this weird picture is beefed up by a clumsily inserted, albeit terrific, performance segment by L.A. punkers T.S.O.L., which is lifted in its entirety from Corman's own 1983 *Suburbia*. (Doug Brod)

Rolling Rock: hand it to Hopper.



Van Damme gets ready to rumble.

Damme's considerable skill as a martial artist. There's a story here, too—the true story, in fact, of the first westerner to win a round-robin international hand-to-hand combat tournament—which is given short shrift by director Arnold in favor of well-staged and crisply shot body crunchings. *Bloodsport* can't compete with such great American kung-fu features as *Enter the Dragon* and *Golden Needles*, but it's not bad. (Doug Brod)

## FREEWAY

Darlanne Fluegel, James Russo, Richard Belzer. Directed by Francis Delia. 1988. Rated R. (New World cassette, 91 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$79.95)

This yawnfest about a rash of on-the-road blowaways perpetrated by a psycho ex-priest might have been mildly entertaining if director Delia had only poured on the exploitation juice. Instead, he works out his hostility toward the Catholic Church

## KERNEL KEY

- ★ So bad, it's bad
- ★★ A movie to fold laundry by
- ★★★ Recommended
- ★★★★ Now that's entertainment

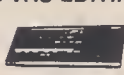


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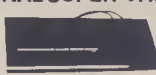
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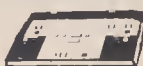
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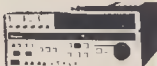
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## S P O R T S

### SNOW MOTION ★★★★★

John Eaves, Suzy Chaffee, Bob Salerno, Wolfgang Junginger, Jim Bucher. Directed by Willy Bogner. 1988. (Nelson cassette, 40 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$14.98)

### BY ROY HEMMING

When last year's theatrical and video release of Bogner's *Fire and Ice* got rave reviews for its ski sequences but pans for its silly storyline, Nelson got the bright idea of re-editing the movie to remove the story altogether. The result: a newly released 40-minute featurette of just the

action sequences, with a background score of soft rock and New Age sounds.

It's a winner of a move—for the skiing, tobogganing, snowboarding, iceboating and hang gliding scenes remain among the most fantastic and exciting ever filmed. Best of all, much of the action has a wild sense of humor that's rare in ski movies—with stunts by Eaves (who doubled for Roger Moore in the ski chases of several James Bond movies) that will leave you laughing as well as gasping. And, of course, there are quiet sequences that are simply stunning for the beauties of Bogner's winter cinematography (mostly shot at St. Moritz, Kitzbühl, Vail, Aspen, Snowbird and the Canadian Rockies).

But motion is what Petra von Oelffen's editing emphasizes—and I expect it will be a long time before I see man-made and woman-made action on snow that can equal what's here. Incidentally, the end credits, for some reason, are for the complete original *Fire and Ice* and not for this re-edited version.

## H E A L T H

### LIVING WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE ★★★★★

Hosted by Arthur Ashe. Directed by David H. Smith. 1988. (Creative Street cassette, 60 min., \$34.95)

### THE EIGHT-WEEK CHOLESTEROL CURE ★★★★★

Introduced by Larry King. Directed by Kip Norris. 1988. (Video Ticket cassette, 60 min., Hi-Fi mono, \$29.95)

### THE FRIENDLY FLAMES STRESS-REDUCTION PROGRAM ★★★★★

Narrated by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn. Directed by Lee Kraft. 1987. (Video Craft Classics cassette, 30 min., \$29.95)

### BY GENEVIEVE A. KAZDIN

As a medically controlled hypertensive patient struggling to reduce a dangerously high cholesterol level, I approached these tapes with more than ordinary reviewer interest. I only wish I had seen them earlier in my treatment program.

Too often, the first symptom of hypertension or high cholesterol is a heart attack or stroke. Yet the number of Americans who are at serious risk now totals more than 60 million. Most important, most of us could dramatically reduce our risks by making the simple changes in our lives these tapes outline.

Ashe, tennis champion and heart-attack survivor, narrates *Living with High Blood Pressure*, based on the book *Three Medical Experts Tell You What You Want to Know About High Blood Pressure*, by Neil B. Shulman, M.D., Elijah Saunders, M.D., and W. Dallas Hall, M.D. The tape offers solid, easy-to-understand, non-sense information about how high blood pressure develops, how it is measured and how to control it. We follow three patients, with an emphasis on how lifestyle changes play a role in controlling their blood pressure.

Larry King, the talk-show host and also a survivor of a heart attack (and multiple-bypass surgery), introduces *The Eight-Week Cholesterol Cure*. The title, I think,

Genevieve A. Kazdin also writes for *Newsday* and *Children's Video Report*.



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Both of the foregoing tapes touch briefly on exercise and stress. We have all learned, of course, that exercise affects these risk factors. So does stress. We all deal with stress in some form in our daily lives, but it is manifested differently in each of us. In *The Friendly Flames Stress-Reduction Program*, Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, director of the Stress Reduction Program of the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, talks about the importance of relaxation and stillness of mind. As he tells how his program will help regulate stress and tension, all we see is a burning fireplace. There is no music, no distractions—only the quiet voice of Dr. Kabat-Zinn. At first, I felt foolish watching this tape until, almost against my will, I began to relax. This tape has now become an oasis of peace and restoration in my daily life as both a journalist and homemaker. (Creative Street is at 3719 Washington Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46205; Video Ticket is at 1133 N. Hollywood Way, Burbank, CA 91505; Video Craft is at 1790 Broadway, Suite 701, New York, NY 10019.)

Contrary to what the packaging of this tape touts, this is not a fitness plan for those of "any age" but, rather, for those

FEBRUARY 1989 63



REVIEWS

One might argue that some of what Lansbury calls her "mental techniques" and household exercises are a bit on the silly side. There's no question that a brisk bike ride or walk will go a long way toward slimming the body and improving mental attitude—as she demonstrates—but is sewing really the strenuous activity she claims it can be? Other fitness-minded viewers may disagree. (Wood Knapp is at 140 E. 45th St., New York, NY 10017.)

## THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION, PART II—THE METAL YEARS ★★★★★

BY ROBERT CHRISTGAU  
AND CAROLA DIBBELL

it's rude, kids love it, parents hate it. But the closer you look, the more stupid and delusory it seems. Metal isn't basic—it cultivates a pseudovirtuosity that negates content. The dreams it promulgates are usually foolish and often destructive. Eighty percent of the "people" who like it are male, and 98 percent of them are white.

We get the feeling director Speeris went into this sequel to her L.A. punk documentary enamored of the theory and came out dismayed by the facts. After interviewing dozens of performers, several groupies, one self-promoting impresario and a woman cop, she still obviously admires the manic dedication and hang-loose irreverence of metal's musicians and fans. But the evidence does pile up. Sex talk that at first seems purely bawdy is gradually revealed as just the usual locker-room misogyny. Drugs have gone out of fashion, but not alcohol. In one truly horrifying sequence, W.A.S.P.'s Chris Holmes, reclining in a swimming pool wearing full leathers, pours two bottles of vodka down his throat as his mother looks on with a nervous smile.

L.A.'s atypically glam scene is where the hot American metal bands hail from these days, but that's a new development. Of the six elder statesmen who volunteer their tarnished wisdom, only Alice Cooper got his start in the showbiz capital. Maybe that's why the old guys make so much more sense than the young ambition addicts whose mercifully truncated music is the movie's ostensible subject. More likely it's that they're successful enough to have turned into elder statesmen and smart enough to have succeeded. This movie bombed in its theatrical release because it got panned in metal's word-of-mouth underground. Non-fans will learn a lot from it. A lot.

## THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER ★★★

BY GENEVIEVE A. KAZDIN

An old tailor, beset by poverty and illness, runs out of buttonhole twist at a crucial moment. His only companion, Simpkin the cat, is of no help. How the tailor's problem gets solved involves a bit of magic—and small brown mice.

Strep reads the story with a soft, expressive voice. Some of Potter's words, however, are not in common usage today, and most American kids will have no familiarity with the vocabulary of a gentleman's tailor. But both the narration and the accompanying pictures provide ample context for understanding.

As for the pictures, David Jorgensen's illustrations are lovely—delicate, elegant drawings that express the mood and feeling of the slender story perfectly. They are not the style of illustration today's kids usually see on TV. There are no bright colors here, no fast action, no frightening images. That could, of course, be reason enough to buy or rent this tape. Children *can* enjoy and appreciate a variety of art styles if just given the opportunity.

The Chieftains perform some wonderful original music on the soundtrack. The pipes, whistles and unusual Irish instruments complement the story and Streep's voice very well.

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of "a certain age." Some of my friends call it 39-plus.

Lansbury, the popular star of CBS's *Murder, She Wrote*, is clearly in fine shape for a woman her age (63 according to most movie reference books). But she's no Jane Fonda. Her exercises, well described and easy to follow, are geared more toward loosening and stretching than defining and tightening. This is not a program for toning, slimming or strenuous fitness. "I'm not a fanatic," Lansbury says early on. That's refreshing, if nothing else.

One might argue that some of what Lansbury calls her "mental techniques" and household exercises are a bit on the silly side. There's no question that a brisk bike ride or walk will go a long way toward slimming the body and improving mental attitude—as she demonstrates—but is sewing really the strenuous activity she claims it can be? Other fitness-minded viewers may disagree. (Wood Knapp is at 140 E. 45th St., New York, NY 10017.)

## MUSIC

### THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION, PART II—THE METAL YEARS ★★★★★

Ozzy Osbourne, Gene Simmons.  
Directed by Penelope Spheeris.  
1988. (RCA/Columbia cassette, 94 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$89.95)

BY ROBERT CHRISTGAU  
AND CAROLA DIBBELL

In theory, metal is today's "cool rock 'n' roll—the music of the peop

it's rude, kids love it, parents hate it. But the closer you look, the more stupid and delusory it seems. Metal isn't basic—it cultivates a pseudovirtuosity that negates content. The dreams it promulgates are usually foolish and often destructive. Eighty percent of the "people" who like it are male, and 98 percent of them are white.

We get the feeling director Spheeris went into this sequel to her L.A. punk documentary enamored of the theory and came out dismayed by the facts. After interviewing dozens of performers, several groupies, one self-promoting impresario and a woman cop, she still obviously admires the manic dedication and hang-loose irreverence of metal's musicians and fans. But the evidence does pile up. Sex talk that at first seems purely bawdy is gradually revealed as just the usual locker-room misogyny. Drugs have gone out of fashion, but not alcohol. In one truly horrifying sequence, W.A.S.P.'s Chris Holmes, reclining in a swimming pool wearing full leathers, pours two bottles of vodka down his throat as his mother looks on with a nervous smile.

L.A.'s atypically glam scene is where the hot American metal bands hail from these days, but that's a new development. Of the six elder statesmen who volunteer their tarnished wisdom, only Alice Cooper got his start in the showbiz capital. Maybe that's why the old guys make so much more sense than the young ambition addicts whose mercifully truncated music is the movie's ostensible subject. More likely it's that they're successful enough to have turned into elder statesmen and smart enough to have succeeded. This movie bombed in its theatrical release because it got panned in metal's word-of-mouth underground. Non-fans will learn

## KID VIDEO

### THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER ★★★

"Picturemation" featurette. Narrated by Meryl Streep. Directed by Mark Sottnick. 1988. (Sony cassette, 30 min., Hi-Fi stereo, \$14.95)

BY GENEVIEVE A. KAZDIN

Yes, Beatrix Potter did write of things other than Peter Rabbit. This is a version of one of those lesser-known stories.

An old tailor, beset by poverty and illness, runs out of buttonhole twist at a crucial moment. His only companion, Simpkin the cat, is of no help. How the tailor's problem gets solved involves a bit of magic—and small brown mice.

Streep reads the story with a soft, expressive voice. Some of Potter's words, however, are not in common usage today, and most American kids will have no familiarity with the vocabulary of a gentleman's tailor. But both the narration and the accompanying pictures provide ample context for understanding.

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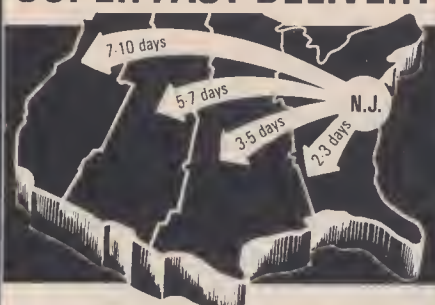
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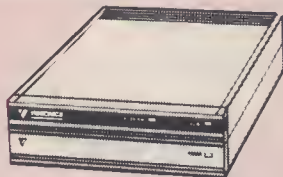
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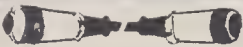
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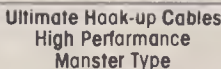
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### ACTION

**CARIBE** (1988) John Savage and Kara Glover sabotage arms shipments, partake in "uncivilized passion" and sweat bullets in Belize. Rated R. (*Vestron, Jan. 18*)

**CROSS FIRE** (1989) Richard Norton leads a new MIA-rescue team. Acres of Southeast Asian jungle are leveled. Rated R. (*Nelson, Jan. 24*)

**DEAD END CITY** (1988) Robert (*Maniac Cop*) Z'Dar's hoodlums terrorize its residents with beatings aplenty. Greg Cummins leads a sleeveless guerrilla resistance. Rated R. (*AIP, Jan. 24*)

**L.A. HEAT** (1988) Former sweat-hog Lawrence-Hilton Jacobs turns from Boom-Boom to bang-bang as a cop bent on crushing druglords. With Jini Brown. (*Raedon, Jan. 1*)

**RAGE TO KILL** (1988) Oliver Reed, James Ryan and Cameron Mitchell expend excess rage on a Caribbeian isle. "Inspired by the Granada [sic] incident," says the press release. (*AIP, Jan. 24*)

**SKELETON COAST** (1989) Mean Angolans take a hostage there, so seven mercenaries blow it apart. With Ernest Borgnine, Oliver Reed. Rated R. (*Nelson, Jan. 24*)

### SUSPENSE

**AMERICAN ROULETTE** (1988) A Latin American ruler ducks death squads in London. With Andy Garcia. Rated R. (*Vidmark, Feb. 7*)

**THE FREEWAY MANIAC** (1988) Ax-murderer James Courtney opens shop on the highway. Business gets off to a choppy start. Rated R. (*Media, Jan. 11*)

**THE BLUE LIGHTNING** (1986) PI Sam Elliot leaves San Francisco for the Australian outback, an opal mine and macho gunplay with Robert Culp. (*Fries, Jan. 31*)

**SCHIZOID** (1985) Some nut slays his way through a shrink's patient list. With Christopher Lloyd, Klaus Kinski. Rated R. (*Cannon, Jan. 18*)



*Haas on the run from Loneliness.*

### DRAMA

**THE BIG BLUE** (1988) Jean-Marc Barr and Jean Reno dig sea diving without gear. Rosanna Arquette digs Jean-Marc. Gurgling tragedy ensues. Rated PG. (*RCA/Columbia, Feb. 23*)

**THE DEAD POOL** (1988) Dirty Harry (Clint Eastwood) wins tix to see Jerry Garcia and crew. Actually, he goes after a serial killer. Rated R. (*Warner, Jan. 25*)

**KANSAS** (1988) Drifter Andrew McCarthy and thug Matt Dillon step outside and discover that they are in Kansas anymore. (*Media, Jan. 11*)

**SALOME'S LAST DANCE** (1988) Oscar Wilde watches a bracing enactment of his play in a London brothel. Boobs, blood and sundry deviance by Ken Russell. With Glenda Jackson. Rated R. (*Vestron, Jan. 18*)

**SEVEN HOURS TO JUDGMENT** (1988) Ron Leibman takes judge Beau Bridges' wife hostage when Beau sets Ron's wife's killers free. Rated R. (*Media, Jan. 25*)

**THE WIZARD OF LONELINESS** (1988) WWII. Lukas Haas runs away from his eccentric guardians, then opts for poignancy. Rated PG-13. (*Virgin, Feb. 1*)

**THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG** (1961) It's the world's oldest world, and American artist William Holden stumbles into it. With Nancy Kwan. (*Paramount, Feb. 1*)

### LYCRA

**SPORTS ILLUSTRATED'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY SWIMSUIT VIDEO** (1989) On location with *SI*'s present and former spandex-clad models. (*HBO, Feb. 10*)

### FOREIGN

**THE FAMILY** (1987) Director Ettore Scola traces an octogenarian's life. With Vittorio Gassman, Fanny Ardant. Rated PG. Italian, available in dubbed or subtitled versions. (*Vestron, Feb. 1*)

**RED BEARD** (1965) A young physician undergoes spiritual awakening. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. With Toshiro Mifune. B&W. Japanese, with English subtitles. (*Media, Jan. 11*)

### COMEDY

**2 IDIOTS IN HOLLYWOOD** (1988) Flatulegenic comestibles rule as the oafish Murphy Wegg and Taylor Dup tag-team it in Tinseltown. (*New World, Jan. 24*)

**CADDYSHACK II** (1988) Jackie Mason and Chevy Chase buy Bushwood and terrorize wealthy golfers with knavish humor. Rated PG. (*Warner, Feb. 8*)

**DANGEROUS CURVES** (1988) Two happenin' California dudes, like, lose a Porsche and have to deal. Rated PG. (*Vestron, Feb. 1*)

**DR. ALIEN** (1988) She comes from outer space with a serum that whips nerds into hunks. With Judy Landers. Rated R. (*Paramount, Feb. 1*)

**A FISH CALLED WANDA** (1988) Jamie Lee Curtis deflates John Cleese's English reserve while Kevin Kline tortures Michael Palin. Rated R. (*CBS/Fox, Feb. 23*)

**GLITCH** (1988) Failed thieves Ted (*Love Boat*) Lange and Dick (*Get Smart*) Gautier play peek-a-boo with mobsters and starlets. With Teri Weigel. Rated R. (*Academy, Feb. 2*)

**HORSE FEATHERS** (1932) The Marx Brothers try to turn Huxley College's football team into some gooda squad. With Thelma Todd. B&W. (*MCA, Feb. 23*)

**HOT TO TROT** (1988) Bobcat Goldthwait pins his future hopes on a talking horse. Dabney Coleman hides the oats. Rated PG. (*Warner, Jan. 18*)

**MIDNIGHT RUN** (1988) Bounty hunter Robert De Niro propels crooked accountant Charles Grodin across the US in a stream of invective. Rated R. (*MCA, Feb. 23*)

*Feathers: Chico and Harpo enjoy a pig in Marxian dialectics.*







Fossey monkeys with the Apes.

## DOCUMENTARY

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC** The new tapes include *Search for the Great Apes*, documenting Dian Fossey's studies; *In the Shadow of Vesuvius*; and *White Wolf*. (Vestron, Feb. 15)

**REMEMBERING MARILYN** (1987) Monroe, not Munster. Lee Remick leads the hagiography. (Vestron, Feb. 15)

**THE STORY OF ENGLISH** (1986) Robert MacNeil explores the language. The five tapes: *An English Speaking World*, *A Muse of Fire*, *Black on White*, *The Mother Tongue* and *Next Year's Words: A Look into the Future*. (Home Vision, Jan. 1)

## HORROR

**THE CARRIER** (1987) Gregory Fortescue, infected with the touch o' death, sizzles his neighbors into dustpiles. With Stevie Lee. Rated R. (Magnun, Jan. 5)

**PRIME EVIL** (1989) Bloodletting monks sacrifice family members in Satan's name. A nun cries foul. With William Beckwith. Rated R. (New World, Jan. 24)

**POLTERGEIST III** (1988) They were here. They came back. Now they won't go away. Tom Skerritt and Nancy Allen try to save Heather O'Rourke. Rated PG-13. (MGM/UA, Feb. 14)

## VINTAGE TV

**THE ADVENTURES OF CHARLIE CHAN, VOLS. 1 & 2** (1958) J. Carrol Naish portrays the oddly mustachioed detective on two, three-episode tapes from the TV series. B&W. (King Bee, Feb. 9)

## MUSIC

**BLACK MOSES OF SOUL** (1974) Isaac Hayes and the Movement provide 80 minutes of bell-bottomed funk. (King Bee, Feb. 9)

**FREEDOM BEAT** (1987) Peter Gabriel, Sting, Sade, Elvis Costello and others perform during an Artists Against Apartheid concert. (Pacific Arts, Jan. 15)

**MOONWALKER** (1988) Michael Jackson shuffles, leaps, wiggles and eludes the ravages of time in this document of his '88 world tour. (CBS Music, Jan. 10)

**THE TRUE STORY OF 200 MOTELS** (1988) Frank Zappa goes behind the scenes of his own early '70s movie/experiment. With Ringo Starr, Keith Moon, Theodore Bikel. (Honker, Jan. 31)

**UNCLE MEAT** (1988) Frank Zappa spent 20 years preparing this visual time capsule of abnormal folks. (Honker, Jan. 31)

**WILLIE NELSON—GREATEST HITS LIVE** (1989) A bandana fete recorded at the Austin, Texas, Opera House. (Vestron, Feb. 15)

## FITNESS

**RAQUEL—LOSE 10 LBS. IN 3 WEEKS** (1989) Welch offers a diet plan and joins her personal trainer David White in two 40-minute workouts. (HBO, Jan. 1)

## FAMILY

**CRY FROM THE MOUNTAIN** (1985) An inspirational, *Deliverance*-like father-and-son adventure with a "special appearance" by the Rev. Billy Graham. With Wes Parker. Rated PG. (IVE, Feb. 9)

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**CLASSIC FAIRY TALES** (1983) Short, BBC-produced animated versions of stories by Hans Christian Andersen, Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. (FHE, Feb. 9)

**POUND PUPPIES AND THE LEGEND OF BIG PAW** (1988) They sniff it out from the Dark Ages through the '50s. (FHE, Feb. 9)

**VIDEO STORYBREAK, THE CHILDREN'S CHOICE** (1988) Bob Keeshan narrates these animated children's stories. The four tapes include: *How to Eat Fried Worms*, *Arnold of the Ducks*, *Chocolate Fever* and *C.L.U.T.Z.* (Playhouse, Jan. 26)



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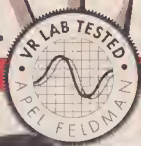
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# TEST REPORTS



## SUMMARY Sony ED Beta Camcorder, Model EDC-55

The first camcorder in the ultra-high-resolution ED Beta format is radically different from any model we've tested before. For starters, it's the heaviest (a little over 17 pounds with battery and tape) and most expensive (\$7,700) camcorder we've seen yet. It also yielded the highest minimum required illumination measurement we've encountered in a long time (23.7 lux—and that's with the gain switch set to 18 dB). We know that doesn't sound like good news. On the other hand, here are two quotes taken directly from the APEL test measurements of the EDC-55: "Best resolution of any camcorder tested to date (520 lines of horizontal resolution)"; "Most accurate rendition of the Macbeth Color Chart of any camera tested to date." And there you have it. The EDC-55 delivers *the best* video picture you can get from a consumer camcorder, bar none.

Not that it has the look or feel of a consumer camcorder. The fact is, Sony intends this camcorder for the prosumer market—intensive home video users. Semipro videographers who like to earn extra money shooting weddings on weekends, for example. As such, the layout and configuration of the EDC-55's many controls are similar to those you'd find on a professional videocamera.

As you may have gathered by now, this is not a camcorder for everybody. Particularly when you note the fact that at the normal gain setting, its minimum required illumination is 140 lux! (That's partly due to the fact that this camcorder incorporates two CCD image-sensing chips as opposed to one.) But if you aspire to shoot on a near-professional level in your own home or if you're an independent video producer who's looking to invest in a relatively inexpensive pro videocamera, this model may look like the answer to your prayers. As it is, in terms of picture quality, the EDC-55 stands so high above the rest of the pack that it's in a class by itself.

## FEATURES

As we stated in the summary, this model incorporates two newly developed CCD image-sensing chips; one handles the luminance (brightness) portion of the video signal while the other takes care of the chroma (color) part of the signal. The total pixel count here is 420,000, and for once this number really means something, because the number of *effective* pixels (380,000) in this

camcorder is remarkably close to the actual number. This is part of what makes the camcorder's incredible picture resolution possible. There's also the matter of the very high bandwidth at which the ED Beta format records (it extended up to 9.3 MHz!) and the special (not to mention expensive) ED (extended definition) metal tape required by the new format.

One of the most interesting things about



this camcorder is that it's detachable. The camera section can be physically separated from the VCR section, so the VCR can be used as a portable deck by attaching a VTR adapter. When the two sections are together, you'd never know they were detachable, and there's a reason for that: The VCR section doesn't just pop off the camera section. Detachment involves removing several screws from the handgrip and shoulder pad assemblies.

The variable-speed power zoom lens has a ratio of 10:1. The variable-speed electronic shutter has five settings, going from  $\frac{1}{100}$  of a second to  $\frac{1}{2000}$ .

A couple of special features on this model make in-camera editing easy. There is, as has become common among high-end camcorders of all stripes, a flying erase head for glitch-free cuts. The shuttle edit feature gives you quick access to indexed shots, while the edit search feature allows quick indexing in the record/pause mode. The VCR section of the camcorder has controls for both video and audio insert editing, allowing you to place new audio and/or video shots into an already existing tape without causing any picture breakup.

There are two modes of audio recording here: conventional and Beta Hi-Fi. (The detachable microphone is a stereo one.) The presence of both allows for more creative



manipulation of the soundtrack. For example, you could use the Hi-Fi track for music and the conventional audio track for voice-over narration.

While many of the functions on this camcorder are automatic, focusing is not. The white balance control is indicative of just how much the EDC-55 resembles a professional videocamera. While such controls on regular consumer camcorders have small pictures next to each setting—the sun for outdoor shooting, a light bulb for indoors—here the white balance is set according to specific color temperatures: 5,600 K (outdoors) or 3,200 K (indoors). White balance can also be set manually.

## LAB MEASUREMENTS: Sony ED Beta Camcorder Model Number: EDC-55 Serial Number: 200231

### CAMERA SECTION

MINIMUM ILLUMINATION	23.7 Lux
HORIZONTAL RESOLUTION	600 Lines
COLOR CONTAMINATION	1 IRE
WHITE BALANCE	4 IRE
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS (optimum/minimum illumination)	
Red-Field Chromo, AM	36.5/37.5 dB
Luminance	45.9/37.1 dB
MINIMUM FOCAL DISTANCE	42 Inches (3 inches, macro)
LENS APERTURE	f1.6
ZOOM RATIO	10:1
FOCAL LENGTH	10.5 mm to 105 mm

### AUDIO SECTION

MAXIMUM MIKE OUTPUT	
Conventional	1.1 Volts
Beta Hi-Fi	2.2 Volts
EXTERNAL MIKE SENSITIVITY	
Conventional	1.3 mv
Beta Hi-Fi	2.1 mv
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO	
Conventional	67.6 dB
Beta Hi-Fi	82.8 dB
FLUTTER (Beta Hi-Fi only)	
DIN	.008%
WRMS	.001%
THD (at 1 kHz, -10 dB, Beta Hi-Fi only)	.30%
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	
(at -20 dB, Beta Hi-Fi only)	20 Hz to 12 kHz

### COMBINED PERFORMANCE

HORIZONTAL RESOLUTION (video output)	520 Lines
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS (optimum/minimum illumination)	
Red-Field Chromo, AM (video out)	36.3/37.9 dB
Luminance (video out)	43.5/39.9 dB

### ADDITIONAL DATA

WEIGHT (including battery and tape)	17¼ Pounds
DIMENSIONS (HxWxD, in inches)	11½ x 9½ x 20¼
POWER ZOOM SPEED	3 Seconds
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	\$7,700

All measurements and charts supplied by APEL  
(Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory).

Finally, the camcorder has a set of direct audio/video inputs and outputs, and S-connector inputs and outputs for feeding the separated luminance and chrominance signals into a similarly equipped monitor/receiver. Accessories include a battery pack, a black-and-white lens cap (for use during manual white balance adjustment), a cleaning cassette and a number of different connecting cables.

## CONTROLS

On the rear of the camcorder, below the battery/AC power pack compartment, are phone jacks, a DC input and control-L jacks for syncing up the VCR section with other Beta decks. On the right side of the camcorder are the record-level meters. These are honest-to-goodness VU meters, not LED level indicators, and as such provide a greater degree of accuracy in setting and monitoring sound recording levels. Below these are the level-setting dials, date and time setting buttons and a small counter display area (which shows a variety of other status indications as well).

Up forward, toward the front of the camcorder, are the white balance controls, the dial selector for the variable-speed shutter, the edit search feature, other edit-related controls and a button that changes the displays in the electronic viewfinder.

When opened, a hinged cover on top of the camcorder body discloses various VCR-related controls. These include the usual tape-transport controls, as well as insert-edit buttons.

A/V output jacks, the S-connector and microphone input jacks are all on the bottom edge of the camcorder's left side. The hand-grip section near the lens assembly has the usual rocker switch arrangement for power zoom action and a button for stopping or starting the record function. In addition to the usual focus, zoom and iris adjustment rings on the lens assembly, there is a flange-back ring, which ensures that an object is in focus both at the wideangle and telephoto positions while zooming.

## TEST RESULTS

Of course, the measurements that are going to stun everybody first are the ones for picture resolution: 600 lines of horizontal resolution through the camera section alone and an absolutely unprecedented 520 lines through the record cycle at the Beta II speed, which gives you two hours of recording on an EL-500 tape. While this kind of resolution produces incredibly vivid picture detail, we were equally impressed by measurements of white balance and color contamination. There was a mere 4 IRE of chrominance on a recording of a neutral object when the white balance was adjusted for optimum, and color contamination was a negligible 1 IRE. Color purity, phase accuracy and chroma saturation

were among the best APEL has ever measured on a camcorder of any format. Fig. 1 shows the reproduction of the Macbeth Color Chart, which is a standardized chart APEL uses to make color measurements. APEL commented that the EDC-55 gave the "most accurate reproduction" of the chart of any camcorder tested. Look at the bottom row and note how well, for example, the camcorder reproduces the shades between white and black.

Minimum required illumination is another story. But given the extreme sophistication



Fig. 1. Color reproduction: best ever.

of this model, we're not surprised at the reading of 23.7 lux (with the gain setting on 18 dB). At 0 dB, it goes all the way up to 140 lux, a reading which calls for near-professional lighting. But we're sure that anyone who wants or needs the excellent picture quality this camcorder offers probably already knows a bit about proper lighting.

Video signal-to-noise ratios were good all around; while chroma S/N numbers were only slightly better than average (36.3 dB, optimum light level), luminance numbers really shined (43.5 dB, optimum light level). Overall, the astounding picture detail and true color reproduction of this camcorder won't fall prey to distracting video noise.

Beta Hi-Fi audio results were excellent as far as signal-to-noise (82.8 dB), distortion (.30%) and wow and flutter (.001%) were concerned. We were puzzled at the roll-off in frequency response, which occurred at 12 kHz. To be sure, this was still better than what we obtained with the conventional, monophonic tracks, and, unless you're a very exacting audiophile, you may not be able to discern the difference. But we still found this shortcoming a bit disappointing.

That aside, this camcorder is a knockout. We can't overemphasize that it's not for everybody; in fact, we consider it to be an industrial/professional piece that Sony decided to market in the consumer arena. This is a bold, welcome step on the company's part, and this product is a beautifully engineered piece of video dream machinery.

—Len Feldman

# TEST REPORTS



## S U M M A R Y

### Panasonic S-VHS VCR, Model PV-S4864

This VCR is important not so much for what it is (a pretty good S-VHS deck) than for what it represents: a genuine effort to make the high-resolution S-VHS format more accessible to the mainstream video consumer. While most decks in this format are stacked with editing features that set hardcore video hobbyists drooling but leave the inveterate time-shifter/movie-watcher cold, the PV-S4864 eschews the fancy stuff and concentrates on functions that have more mass appeal, such as bar-code timer programming. Most important, it offers consumers the superb resolution of S-VHS at a list price of \$950, a more down-to-earth cost than we've seen on comparable decks.

Of course, the PV-S4864 also has Hi-Fi audio recording and a built-in MTS decoder for receiving stereo-TV broadcasts, features that are now commonplace on high-end VCRs. While the MTS decoder left something to be desired (and this by now has become an all-too-common refrain for us), the Hi-Fi audio section performed admirably for the most part. And though the video performance did not represent the apex of S-VHS quality, the PV-S4864 can, in fact, put out the 400 lines of horizontal resolution that are the format's main selling point.

We think it's great that Panasonic realizes that S-VHS needs to break out of the video elite corner it's been painted into. If enough consumers go for a more moderately priced deck like this one, software companies might be encouraged to take S-VHS seriously enough to release more movies in the format. The PV-S4864 will, hopefully, help bring S-VHS into the real world.

## FEATURES

The feature that will appeal most to time-shifters is bar-code programming, which Panasonic pioneered. The deck comes with a small remote transmitter (Fig. 1) and a sheet of bar-code lines. These bar codes represent different times and channels. To program, simply slide the remote transmitter across the desired bar codes. Once that's done, aim the transmitter at the VCR and press a button. This method is a lot less tedious and confusing than many others, which require you to, say, push the same button half a dozen times while keeping close watch on the display area of your VCR.

The deck's tuner can receive as many as 155 VHF, UHF and cable-TV channels and can automatically memorize the available stations in your area. The recently in-

troduced VHS index search system is also included. This automatically places an electronic signal on the tape every time you begin a new recording, making access to multiple programs on a single tape easier. Playback special effects on this four-head deck are fast-search, double-speed playback, freeze-frame, slow-motion and frame-by-frame advance. Eight timer programs can be set over a period of one month, and the one-touch recording feature can be programmed in 30-minute increments for up to four hours. Whether you program the timer via remote control or the bar-code method, all programming information can be displayed on screen.

## CONTROLS

Even when the hinged flap on the lower part of the front panel is down, revealing

most of the controls, the layout of this deck is simple and uncluttered. It includes, of course, all the major tape transport controls, various switches for controlling audio modes, buttons for handling the functions of the MTS decoder and the indexing system. As is common on most current VCRs, the only controls visible when the hinged flap

## LAB MEASUREMENTS:

### Panasonic S-VHS VCR

Model Number: **PV-S4864**

Serial Number: **GBSA30902**

## VIDEO SECTION

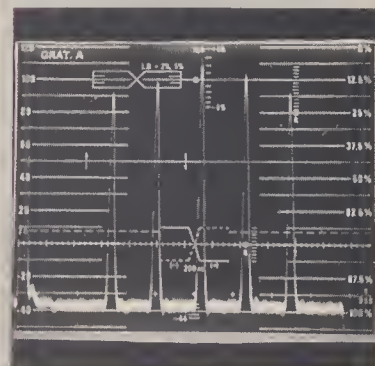
### FREQUENCY RESPONSE (at 4.20 MHz)

Video Output	
SP	-6.02 dB
EP	-11.30 dB
TV Output	
SP	-3.84 dB
EP	-10.9 dB

### SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS

Red-Field Chroma (video output)	
SP (AM/PM)	43.1/39.2 dB
EP (AM/PM)	40.1/38.0 dB
Red-Field Chroma (TV output)	
SP (AM/PM)	42.5/38.6 dB
EP (AM/PM)	40.6/37.8 dB
Luminance (video output)	
SP (100/50/10 IRE)	41.8/42.5/42.6 dB
EP (100/50/10 IRE)	40.8/41.2/42.0 dB
Luminance (TV output)	
SP (100/50/10 IRE)	39.6/40.5/41.0 dB
EP (100/50/10 IRE)	38.5/39.2/39.9 dB

### Stairstep Linearity (video output)





is up are the power and cassette eject buttons.

One control that you should keep on at all times is the S-VHS/VHS switch. Since the deck automatically switches to VHS recording or playback when a conventional VHS tape is inserted, we find this switch a little gratuitous. After all, why would you want to record in conventional VHS mode on an S-VHS tape, particularly considering the higher cost of such tape?

The display area is in the upper right-hand portion of the VCR's front panel, and it shows clock time, selected channel and various other mode and status indications. The rear panel of the deck features the usual direct audio/video inputs and outputs, antenna inputs and outputs, and, of course, the special S-connector that sends separate brightness and color signals to a similarly equipped monitor/receiver. The remote control duplicates most of the functions on the

machine's control panel, and the supplied light-pen transmitter handles the bar-code programming tasks.

## TEST RESULTS

In APEL's frequency sweep test, video frequency response extended past the usual 4.20 MHz, all the way out to 5 MHz, where response went down 10.5 dB when measured via the video output at the fast, SP speed. Results were better, of course, at the 4.20 MHz mark, which is where most S-VHS decks end up anyway. Here, we found an interesting reversal: Response was actually better through the TV output (-3.84 dB) than through the video output (-6.02 dB). But in either case, response was good enough to ensure full enjoyment of the fine detail and sharpness the S-VHS format provides in both recording and playback. In fact, if you record your favorite programs in the SP

modes, you'll probably notice very little difference in quality from the original broadcast.

Video signal-to-noise ratios, on the other hand, were not as good as we would have liked. While readings such as 43.1 dB for AM chroma and 41.8 dB for luminance would fall under the category of "average" in conventional VHS, they're a little less so in S-VHS. So if your eyes are finely tuned, you may notice a bit more video noise (which shows up as grain or shimmer) than

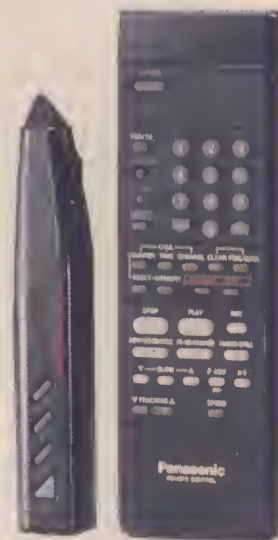


Fig. 1: Bar-code transmitter and remote.

### Color Accuracy (video output)



## AUDIO SECTION

### OUTPUT LEVEL

Conventional (SP/EP)	.40/.40 Volts
Hi-Fi (both speeds)	2.80 Volts

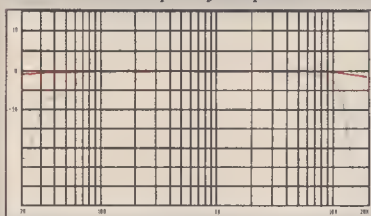
### THD AT REFERENCED OUTPUT

Conventional (SP/EP)	.90/1.3%
Hi-Fi (both speeds)	3.0%

### WEIGHTED PEAK FLUTTER (DIN)

Conventional	
SP (avg/peak)	.17/.20%
EP (avg/peak)	.40/.48%
Hi-Fi	
SP (avg/peak)	.012/.017%
EP (avg/peak)	.010/.014%

### Hi-Fi Frequency Response



### FREQUENCY RESPONSE (for -3 dB)

Conventional	
SP	60 Hz to 10.0 kHz
EP	64 Hz to 3.5 kHz
Hi-Fi (both speeds)	20 Hz to 20 kHz

### HARMONIC DISTORTION (ot -10 dB)

Conventional (100 Hz/1 kHz)	
SP	.12/.17%
EP	.32/.45%

### Hi-Fi (100 Hz/1 kHz/5 kHz)

SP	.94/.62/1.17%
EP	.62/.43/1.17%

### SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO

Conventional (SP/EP)	50.5/48.0 dB
Hi-Fi (SP/EP)	77.4/78.6 dB

### CHANNEL SEPARATION (left/right)

Hi-Fi	
SP	79.4/69.7 dB
EP	78.3/70.9 dB

## MTS DECODER SECTION

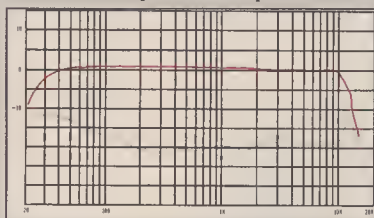
### SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS

(ot 100% modulation)	
Stereo (left/right)	62.7/62.9 dB
SAP	68.9 dB
Mono	64.7 dB

### TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION

(ot 1 kHz, -20 dB)	
Stereo (left/right)	.85/.54%
SAP	.70%
Mono	.35%

### MTS Response and Separation



### FREQUENCY RESPONSE (ot -20 dB)

Stereo	28 Hz to 12 kHz
SAP	20 Hz to 6.0 kHz
Mono	28 Hz to 12 kHz

### CHANNEL SEPARATION (ot -20 dB)

Stereo (left/right)	19.4/19.5 dB
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## ADDITIONAL DATA

### POWER REQUIREMENTS

	22.0 Watts
--	------------

### FAST-FORWARD TIME

(T-120 tape)	4 Min., 22 Sec.
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### FAST-REWIND TIME

(T-120 tape)	4 Min., 22 Sec.
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### DIMENSIONS

(HxWxD, in inches)	3 1/4 x 15 1/4 x 11 7/8
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### WEIGHT

	10 1/2 Pounds
--	---------------

### SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE

	\$950
--	-------

All measurements and charts supplied by APEL (Advanced Product Evolution Laboratory).

you're used to. On the other hand, staircase linearity (the deck's ability to reproduce the various shades of gray between black and white) was better than what we see on most S-VHS decks; the PV-S4864's maximum deviation from perfect linearity never went beyond 12%. Color accuracy and saturation were close to perfect.

Audio frequency response in the Hi-Fi mode was perfectly flat across the entire human hearing range, and, while signal-to-noise ratios weren't as high as we've seen on some decks, they were respectable, always over 77 dB. Unfortunately, the Hi-Fi audio tracks delivered more harmonic distortion (at -10) than we're used to—more, in fact, than was evident on the conventional audio tracks. Since the amount of distortion was generally less than 1%, only the most exacting audiophile will find fault with these readings. The conventional audio tracks fared better than expected; response went out to 10 kHz.

The MTS decoder provided acceptable frequency response and signal-to-noise ratio in the stereo mode, but separation was a little weak, coming in short of the 20 dB mark. This has been a common problem that we've often cited.

All in all, the PV-S4864 is a solid piece of gear that proves S-VHS isn't just for fans of expensive esoterica. —Len Feldman

# TEST REPORTS



## SUMMARY

### Pentax PV-C67A VHS Camcorder

Given the industry buzz and excitement over such new, high-resolution camcorder formats as S-VHS and ED Beta, it's easy to forget that the most popular camcorder format is still full-size VHS. This is one case where familiarity doesn't breed contempt, at least as far as the average consumer is concerned.

This model, Pentax's PV-C67A, didn't particularly impress us. Granted, considering that the camcorder is in the full-size VHS format, its relatively light weight—only six pounds, including battery and cassette—came as a pleasant surprise. But while we had no complaints about such video performance parameters as minimum illumination and color purity and saturation, signal-to-noise ratios, both at minimum and optimum illumination levels, were disappointing. Pentax's own 8mm camcorder (the PV-C880A, reviewed in our January issue) yielded substantially better signal-to-noise readings than this full-size VHS model. The difference in visible background noise (grain or snow in the picture) was also evident during our hands-on evaluation of the product.

Resolution in the record/play cycle was good, given the limitations of the conventional VHS format, but color contamination and white balance error were poorer than we've seen in some time. The audio section performed adequately, and the camcorder's convenience features all do their jobs well, but that doesn't do much to mitigate the fact that picture quality here leaves a good deal to be desired.

## FEATURES

The list of convenience features offered on the Pentax PV-C67A ought to read like a litany to Test Report regulars: power zoom, variable-speed electronic shutter (with settings for  $1/120$ -,  $1/250$ -,  $1/1000$ - and  $1/2000$ -of-a-second speeds), macro or close-up shooting, and an electronic viewfinder that's easily positioned for both left-handed and right-handed users. The image sensor is a  $2/3$ -inch solid-state MOS type, and the record/playback circuitry incorporates HQ picture technology. Pentax has been generous with the number of standard accessories. There's an earphone, a one-hour battery pack, the usual AC adapter/charger, an RF converter (used for direct playback on your TV set via channel 3 or 4), direct audio/video cables and an audio/video input

adapter for recording from external, non-camera sources.

## CONTROLS

Controls along the left side of the camcorder body are generally camera-related: manual or automatic focus selection, auto or manual iris adjustment, shutter-speed selection, self-timer feature and date setting. The macro button is also in this area, up front near the lens itself. The audio/video output jack, an earphone jack and the tracking control are found below the cassette compartment on the right side of the camcorder, as is the usual handgrip with its start/stop button and zoom rocker switch. The electronic viewfinder plugs into a socket on this side of the camcorder, and when you want to use the audio/video input capability, an adapter



allows you to connect both the A/V input cable and the viewfinder to this same socket. Up front, adjacent to the built-in microphone, is an external microphone input jack. Beneath the built-in microphone is a useful feature we haven't seen before. A tiny slide switch alters the characteristics of the mike from "normal" to a setting that reduces noise when you are using the camcorder in a windy environment.

Controls for the camcorder's VCR functions are neatly arranged in a line across the top surface of the camcorder. They include the power switch, rewind, play, fast-forward, stop and "still" buttons. Also included here are the cassette eject button, counter reset button and "display" button, which calls up various status indications in the electronic viewfinder. The battery pack or AC adapter mounts on the rear surface of the camcorder.

## TEST RESULTS

The required minimum illumination for producing a one-volt video signal from the camera section was 6.7 lux—low enough to produce acceptable pictures with ordinary room lighting. White balance was poorer than usual, measuring 15 IRE. The same held true for color contamination, which measured 20 IRE on the sample tested by APEL. Accordingly, video pictures produced on this camcorder will show color where there isn't supposed to be any. Reproduction of colors that were supposed to be there, on the other hand, was very good. Phase accuracy and color saturation were a little off, but not enough to make a



substantial difference in reproduction. Another plus was the excellent image retention: no lagging or streaking of the picture was evident in the record/play cycle.

Camera resolution was a high 340 horizontal lines, but by the time the signal went through the complete record/play cycle and a tape was played back, resolution dropped to the typical 240 lines. This figure was obtained regardless of whether the output was taken directly from the video out jack or from the RF (TV) output.

Video signal-to-noise ratios were disappointing. Chroma AM (color) noise was actually greater under conditions of optimum illumination (34.2 dB) than it was at minimum illumination (39.7 dB). Luminance (brightness) signal-to-noise ratios were marginally acceptable under conditions of optimum illumination (40.2 dB) but were poor when the tests were conducted under conditions of minimum illumination (an

execrable 32.0 dB). All told, no matter what the shooting conditions, the picture will suffer from background noise.

The audio signal-to-noise ratio measured an acceptable 49.3 dB, and the external microphone input sensitivity of 2 mv is low enough to accommodate most any microphone of reasonably good quality.

The disappointing performance of this camcorder is a shame, because its convenience features are extensive and well designed. As spoiled as we've gotten by the high resolution of S-VHS camcorders, we can still appreciate what a good camcorder in the conventional VHS format can offer. Unfortunately, this model falls short in a number of categories. —Len Feldman

## ABOUT THESE TEST REPORTS

Each piece of video equipment we test is a factory-fresh production model—the same quality you would buy in a store. After each product has been tested by APEL—Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory, a leading independent testing facility headed by engineer Frank Barr—it goes to technical editor Len Feldman, an internationally recognized authority with more than 30 years' experience testing home entertainment products. He interprets the data and performs hands-on use tests of each piece of equipment, combining personal, practical experience with the most objective technical data available anywhere.

## LAB MEASUREMENTS:

**Pentax VHS Camcorder**  
Model Number: PV-C67A  
Serial Number: 80702926

## CAMERA SECTION

MINIMUM ILLUMINATION	6.7 Lux
HORIZONTAL RESOLUTION	340 Lines
COLOR CONTAMINATION	20 IRE
WHITE BALANCE	15 IRE
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS (optimum/minimum illumination)	
Red-Field Chroma, AM	33.3/39.8 dB
Luminance	40.2/32.0 dB
MINIMUM FOCAL DISTANCE	43 inches (1 1/8 inch, macro)
LENS APERTURE	f1.6
ZOOM RATIO	6:1
FOCAL LENGTH	12mm to 72mm

## AUDIO SECTION

MAXIMUM MIKE OUTPUT	.38 Volts
EXTERNAL MIKE SENSITIVITY	2.0 mv
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO	49.3 dB

## COMBINED PERFORMANCE

HORIZONTAL RESOLUTION (video/TV output)	240/240 Lines
SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIOS (optimum/minimum illumination)	
Red-Field Chroma, AM (video out)	34.2/39.7 dB
Luminance (video out)	40.8/33.2 dB
Red-Field Chroma, AM (TV out)	33.8/39.3 dB
Luminance (TV out)	40.2/32.8 dB

## ADDITIONAL DATA

WEIGHT (including battery and tape)	6 Pounds
DIMENSIONS (HxWxD, in inches)	9x5x14 7/16
POWER ZOOM SPEED	7 Seconds
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	\$1,899

All measurements and charts supplied by APEL (Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory).

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<b>FAMOUS MAKE</b> • Pro S-VHS • Auto/Manual • 7 Lux • 8:1 Zoom PANASONIC PV-350 MAGNVOX 9246 OLYMPUS VX-S405 HITACHI VM-6000 OLYMPUS VX405 RCA CC-350	<b>1599</b>
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\*With purchase of case \$50

#### PANASONIC

PV-420 • Full Size VHS • 8:1 Zoom • 7 Lux • Flying Erase Head GE CG-9810 RCA CC-250 RCA CC-300 RCA CC-275 PANASONIC 1400 MINOLTA CR1400	<b>945</b>
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\*With purchase of case \$50

#### SVHS-C

<b>PANASONIC</b> PVS-150 • "C" Type • 6:1 Zoom • HQ • 1/2" CCD • Hi Spd Shutter MAGNAVOX 9260 RCA CC-175 JVC GRS 55U • "C" Type SVHS	<b>1280</b>
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\*With purchase of case \$50

#### 8MM

<b>SONY</b> CCD-F40 • 8mm • 4 Lux • Digital RICOH R620 MINOLTA 8100 NEW MINOLTA 8200 CANON E-708 SONY CCD-V9 RICOH R600S	<b>975</b>
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\*With purchase of case \$50

#### INDUSTRIAL

<b>OLYMPUS</b> VX-802 • 8mm • CCD • Piezo Autofocus ELMO ECR-8S SONY EVS-1 DEMO LIKE NEW KYOCERA KD2010 ELMO ECR-8	<b>945</b>
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\*With purchase of case \$50

#### CAMCORDER

<b>PANASONIC</b> AG-170 • 6:1 Zoom • Piezo AutoFocus • Audio Dub PANAS AG450 CANON F1000-S AG6400 ELMO TRV-8	<b>1199</b>
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\*With purchase of Case \$50

#### CLEARANCE & DEMO

<b>FAMOUS 'C' BRAND SPECIAL</b> • "C" Type • 7 Lux • 6:1 Zoom • Auto/Manual Iris PANASONIC PV-110 NEW MINOLTA C-50 GE 99715 RCA CPR 150	<b>730</b>
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#### SUPER VHS VCR

<b>FAMOUS MAKE</b> • SVHS VCR • HiFi • MTS • 8 Event/1 yr prog RCA VR-695 RCA VR-640 NEC DX-2000 ZENITH VRD-700 MITSUBISHI HS-422VR	<b>649</b>
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#### FAMOUS MAKE

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\*With purchase of VCR case kit \$50

#### FAMOUS MAKE

<b>FULL SIZE VCR</b> • MOS • HO • 7 Lux • Hi Speed Shutter MINOLTA CR-1400 RCA CC-300 RCA CC-275 RCA CC-250 HITACHI 3100 HITACHI VM-5100A	<b>865</b>
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\*With purchase of VCR case kit \$50

#### CLEARANCE & DEMOS

<b>CAMCORDERS</b> OLYMPUS VX-404 PANASONIC PV-300 PANASONIC PV-220 8mm SONY V-5 Complete CHINON CB-1003 ELMO ECR-8 MINOLTA 8000	988 599 767 829 765 777 844
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# TEST REPORTS



## SUMMARY Sharp Color LCD Monitor/Receiver, Model 3ML100

If you are the sort of video enthusiast who has to have access to a TV set wherever you go and whenever you want, Sharp's handy little color monitor/receiver can do the trick. Note that we call it a monitor/receiver even though its tiny LCD screen delivers a picture that's only three inches diagonally. That's because the 3ML100 provides for the connection of external video and monophonic audio inputs. If you are tired of checking just-shot scenes in the black-and-white electronic viewfinder of your camcorder, this little set is an ideal on-location monitor.

While no LCD TV has yet been manufactured that can compete with a CRT set for picture quality, under optimum conditions the 3ML100 delivers a very good picture—quite sharp for a set of this type, if you'll excuse the awful pun. In terms of color quality, transient response and other parameters, the set performed quite well. While resolution was 240 lines, scant by normal TV standards, that's very good for an LCD set, considering that 240 lines is about what a conventional VHS VCR delivers.

The only caveat we would offer concerning picture viewing on this Sharp TV is that the viewing angle is extremely critical. A shift from the optimum viewing angle of only 30° will virtually wipe out any visible picture. However, Sharp was thoughtful enough to supply a little fold-up stand, and if you mount the set on it, the optimum viewing angle will be easy to attain.

## FEATURES

The Sharp 3ML100 uses a thin-film transistor Active Matrix system with a total of 92,160 picture elements (pixels). When used outdoors, light is supplied by the sun. Indoors, a built-in light or an optional backlight accessory is used. The tuner section covers the usual VHF and UHF broadcast channels. No, you can't receive cable with this set.

You can power the set with five AA batteries (but they'll go pretty fast), or, using the supplied adapter, with household AC. There's also an optional rechargeable battery pack and an optional car-battery

adapter cord. The set also has an audio/video input terminal.

In addition to the AC adapter, the desk stand and five AA batteries, the set comes with a soft carrying case, a hand strap, an antenna adapter (to connect an external antenna) and an earphone. Optional accessories include the backlight unit and car adapter cord, the rechargeable battery, a special sunshade and an audio/video cable. We feel that the audio/video cable should have been included with the standard package, as many will want to use this little TV set as a camcorder monitor.

## CONTROLS

Controls along the right side of the 3ML100 include thumb-wheel tuning and volume knobs, a power on/off switch and a VHF/UHF band switch. The instant you move the thumb-wheel tuner, an electronically generated dial pointer appears in a vertical line from the top to the bottom of the screen. Since channel numbers are printed above the screen (for VHF) and below (for UHF), the electronic stripe lines up with the applicable channel numbers as you tune. The pointer stripe shows up in green when set to the VHF band and in red when set to the UHF band. Controls along the top of the set include brightness, color and tint knobs, plus a pushbutton labeled "Ch. Call," which, when pressed, brings the electronic dial pointer back on screen momentarily even when you aren't manipulating the tuning knob.

For natural backlighting, the hinged screen surface can be tilted up to an angle of approximately 30°, where it snaps into place. Closing down the screen so that it is parallel with the rest of the set automatically activates the built-in backlight for indoor viewing. The collapsible antenna, when extended, measures just under 27 inches.

The left side of the receiver houses a tiny built-in loudspeaker, an external DC powering terminal, an external antenna jack, a combination audio/video input terminal and an earphone jack. The five AA batteries (or the optional battery pack) go into a compartment on the back of the set.

## TEST RESULTS

As you might expect from an LCD color set, maximum usable illumination was rather low, measuring only 21 footlamberts. Horizontal resolution was 240 lines, about what you would expect from a conventional VHS VCR during tape playback. This resolution corresponds to a video frequency response of 3.0 MHz. Because of the nature of an LCD TV set, such measurements as interlace and convergence do not apply; the pixels here are fixed and predetermined. All told, color and picture quality are quite good for a set of this sort.

Noting the limitations of an LCD set, Sharp equipped the 3ML100 with an unusually sensitive TV tuner. APEL made its usual measurement by simulating a weak signal, the kind you'd get in a fringe area (100 uV/meter), and the resulting color picture was still noise free, sharp and clear. In



fact, APEL reported that even with signals as low as 30 uV/meter (deep fringe-area reception), there was still a viewable color picture. This is extremely important in a set of this kind, since it is portable and likely to be used only with its own single antenna.

As for the audio performance of this tiny TV set, there was sufficient output voltage to drive most high-level inputs on hi-fi amplifiers or receivers, should you want to connect the set to such components for better sound quality. Frequency response available at the earphone terminal was essentially flat from around 100 Hz to just over 12 kHz. The rather poor signal-to-noise ratio noted by APEL and shown in our summary chart was caused by a 30 millivolt output at a frequency of 42.5 kHz. This inaudible component, if filtered out, would result in a more realistic signal-to-noise measurement of 52.5 dB. Since 42.5 kHz is well above the limits of human hearing, this higher S/N figure is more indicative of the amount of background noise you will hear from this set.

The light weight and small size of the Sharp 3ML100 make it an ideal TV to take along to the beach, on picnics, to sporting events and, of course, to use as a color monitor for your favorite camcorder.

—Len Feldman

## LAB MEASUREMENTS:

### Sharp LCD TV

Model Number: **3ML100**

Serial Number: **311053**

## VIDEO SECTION

<b>MAXIMUM USABLE LUMINANCE</b>	21 Footlamberts
<b>RESOLUTION</b> (horizontal)	240 Lines
<b>VIDEO FREQUENCY RESPONSE</b>	3.0 MHz
<b>INTERLACE</b>	NA
<b>TRANSIENT RESPONSE</b>	Excellent
<b>BLACK LEVEL RETENTION</b>	90%
<b>COLOR QUALITY</b>	Good

## AMPLIFIER SECTION

<b>MAXIMUM OUTPUT</b> Audio Output	.84 Volts
<b>TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION</b> (1 kHz, at -10 dB) Audio Output	1.7%
<b>SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO</b> (A weighted) Audio Output	29.0 dB
<b>FREQUENCY RESPONSE</b> Audio Output	100 Hz to 12 kHz

## ADDITIONAL DATA

<b>PICTURE SIZE</b>	3 Inches (diag.)
<b>POWER REQUIREMENTS</b>	5 Watts
<b>DIMENSIONS</b> (HxWxD, in inches)	3 7/16 x 4 1/8 x 8
<b>WEIGHT</b>	14 ounces, with batteries
<b>SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE</b>	\$599

All measurements and charts supplied by APEL (Advanced Product Evaluation Laboratory).

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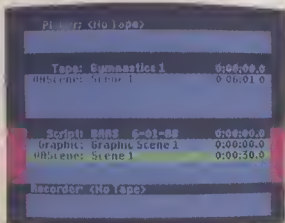


# FIRST LOOK: VIDEONICS' COMPLETE DESKTOP VIDEO EDITOR

In the fall of 1987, a California company called Videonics introduced DirectED, which, by current high-tech design standards, looked fairly innocuous: a small, gray module accompanied by a remote control. But the harmless-looking package contained a lot of power. DirectED was (and is) a video phenomenon: a machine that learns the controls of a VCR and, in tandem with another deck, automatically edits home video movies to specifications set by you.

That isn't all. The software inside DirectED allows you to add titles, graphics, wipes and fades to your videos. In essence, DirectED functions as an all-in-one special-effects/editing system for camcorder users.

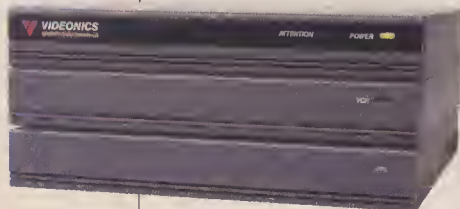
But if DirectED is so great, why did Videonics almost immediately set to work on the more sophisticated ProED?



stores early this year).

The impetus for creating ProED came from two different sources: camcorder users who had already become familiar with the nuts and bolts of home editing, and the video press. While reaction to DirectED was generally enthusiastic, many experienced editors felt the process of editing with the device was too slow and clumsy. (It involves first marking the cuts you want to make on a dub of your original footage, and then inserting your original cassette. While that runs—in real time—DirectED automatically makes the cuts you requested.) Letting DirectED do the work was fine for many people, but seasoned videophiles wanted the option of more hands-on control. There was also the problem of accuracy. Given the vicissitudes of many VCRs, there could be as much as a five-second difference between the

*Left: a sample screen from the ProED system. Below: the two modules that comprise ProED, which can be purchased as a complete system or as an add-on to Videonics' DirectED module.*



I had a chance to find out during a recent visit to Videonics' San Jose offices where I took an exclusive look at a ProED prototype (the final version should hit

video cut marked on the DirectED and the place at which the actual cut got made. Again, for some this was a minor consideration. Others, however, wanted to

tap the power of DirectED but make more accurate cuts.

ProED addresses these concerns directly. It's made to work with editing VCRs—those equipped with jog/shuttle wheels and flying erase heads. Perhaps more important, ProED will handle the controls of *both* VCRs. DirectED can only learn and reproduce the commands of one deck. When I saw the ProED system, it was hooked up to two Panasonic AG-1950s, "industrial" decks that have actually proved quite popular in the consumer market.

This system (which can be used with the DirectED remote or with an optional computer keyboard) gives you the option of fully automatic editing or partial manual editing. On the stand-alone DirectED, you mark scenes as they appear while you are watching your camcorder footage; ProED lets you use the shuttling capabilities of the editing VCR to search through the tape, marking only the scenes you want.

The graphic screen (pictured) shows how the ProED helps you put together your final production, which can be culled from one or more marked tapes. After you've marked your scenes (you can make literally thousands of cuts using as many tapes of camcorder footage as you like), you assemble a "script" for your finished movie. Now as you can see from this screen, we're not dealing with a very elaborate production—

merely a short scene of gymnastics introduced by graphics that have been chosen from ProED's large effects library (which has 64 colors to choose from). But if you've marked scenes from a number of different cassettes and want

to assemble those into a "script," the ProED keeps track of the process and tells you when you need to insert a different tape. DirectED by itself does this as well, but with ProED's options, now

you can insert a second or third tape and zip ahead to the point at which the marked scene is to begin. With DirectED alone, you had to insert the original tape and wait until it got to the marked scene, a yawn-inducing task for those who are used to more flexibility.

And that's precisely what the ProED adds to DirectED's exciting capabilities: flexibility. Not to mention accuracy. Working with a pair of AG-1950s, the cuts you mark are the cuts you get. There's a lot more to this system than we have space to go into here, so we'll take a closer look at ProED in our August issue, where it will be a part of our feature article on home video production. Judging by the prototype I worked with, I think the people at Videonics have done a superb job of tailoring ProED to the needs of more sophisticated home video hobbyists. The entire ProED package has a suggested retail price of \$999. For those who already have DirectED, the add-on ProED is \$499. □

## FACT FINDER

Product: ProED video editing system  
 Manufacturer: Videonics  
 Address: 1129 Dell Ave.,  
 Campbell, CA 95008-6611  
 (408) 866-8300  
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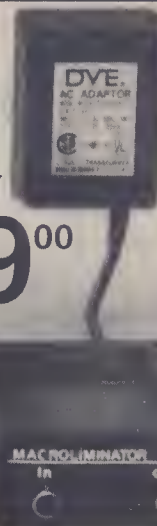
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**...VIDEO HOLLYWOOD**

Continued from page 29

of 1986, followed a frank analysis of the existing market, which convinced Vestron execs that they'd have to make their own hit movies if they wanted top tape titles. Amazingly, Vestron Pictures hit the jackpot first off with *Dirty Dancing*, a sleeper hit at the boxoffice that carried its winning ways over to other areas: To date, the movie's two soundtrack albums have brought in over \$20 million, and *Dirty Dancing* T-shirts, posters, lunch pails and other products still sell like hot cakes today, nearly two years after the movie first hit theater screens. It's estimated that the licensed products have grossed \$200 million at retail.

For Vestron Pictures, *Dirty Dancing* provided an auspicious debut—and a boxoffice success the company has yet to duplicate. According to Vestron's Jon Peisinger, a great deal of care was taken to assure Vestron's tyro theatrical effort would be a commercially viable one. "We green-lighted *Dirty Dancing* around March or April of '86," he says. "By that time, we'd already evaluated the project from a number of different angles with regard to tie-ins from other media.

"We thought the setting and music would appeal to an older demographic group, yet we also believed that the story was fresh enough and contemporary enough to appeal to a younger audience. And we felt the mix of older songs and newly written tunes would give us plenty of promotional exposure on contemporary radio stations."

A *Dirty Dancing*-size theatrical hit translates into super video business, and Vestron has been riding on the movie's coattails for some time. But there's considerable risk attached to movie production, even at low budgetary levels. The costs of advertising, promotion and distribution have skyrocketed over the last two decades, and even lab expenditures have shot up dramatically: Every 35mm print of a two-hour color movie costs approximately \$1,500; if a movie opens nationwide in 800 to 1,000 theaters, that's upwards of \$1.5 million for prints alone. And none of the subsequent Vestron Pictures feature movies—which include such titles as *Anna, The Dead, Lair of the White Worm* and *Waxwork*—has come anywhere near duplicating the success of *Dirty Dancing*; most of them haven't grossed more than a few million dollars in theaters.

While the growth of home video led to an explosion of low-budget B movies in the mid-'80s, the tough economics of theatrical distribution—and the overload of shlocky titles in video stores—has cut the B boom back considerably in the past two years. Nevertheless, the field still attracts independent video suppliers who hope to carve themselves a little niche.

Some independent producers have responded to the decline of the Bs by shift-

ing their emphasis toward upscale movies. For example, Trans World Entertainment, a B-movie powerhouse, recently moved into classier company with the theatrical release of *Full Moon in Blue Water*, starring Gene Hackman and Teri Garr.

But, aside from the boom—and now the bust—in B movies, what impact is video having on more mainstream pictures? Are the movies we watch on video being made differently in consideration of home viewers? The answers are mixed.

Sherry Lansing, former production head at 20th Century-Fox and now a successful independent producer whose hits include *The Accused* and *Fatal Attraction*, claims she hates to say so, but the video market hasn't influenced her at all. "We've made our pictures within the studio system," she says, "and we've made pictures on subjects that we're passionate about. We don't really think about [whether or not] a title's going to have a long life on video."

On the other hand, a company such as Vestron Pictures approaches moviemaking somewhat differently. "We look at all media and how we can tie in," says Peisinger. "Since Vestron Pictures supplies product to Vestron Video, we naturally think of video as our most important revenue stream. The economics of the industry has shifted so that no producer today makes a film without considering the video market—downside or upside."

And there is the well-known bottom line. To those video companies whose product flow depends on self-financed or self-produced motion pictures, the foremost responsibility lies in delivering a movie that will bring people into the theater. This doesn't mean that the video aesthetic is ignored by creative talents; far from it. Some directors make allowances for video screens in preparing their movies for shooting. Widescreen images are often shot with the principal action taking place in an easily cropped area of the frame. This minimizes the need for panning and scanning widescreen movies for TV viewing.

*Nightmare 4's* director Renny Harlin puts himself among the TV-weaned generation of moviemakers and admits to making certain visual concessions to the small screen. "Today's young audiences have grown up with TV," he says, "and they watch a lot of videos. So it's important to shoot a movie that will look good on TV. [*Nightmare 4*] is a horror movie, so it's appropriately dark and shadowy, but it's got a clean, crisp look."

Thom Eberhardt, director of the recent Sherlock Holmes sendup *Without a Clue* (an Orion movie slated for video release shortly), also typifies the new breed of moviemaker with an eye toward subsequent video and TV exhibition. "You've got to think that way," Eberhardt says. "When we were shooting, we always kept in the back of our minds, 'How will this look on TV?'"



In most areas creative input by video investors is limited, if offered at all. Matters of script and casting approval, preproduction and postproduction are still left up to the moviemakers themselves. (An exception to this rule is Media Home Entertainment, which exercises some creative control over the *Nightmare* movies.) And, oddly enough, producers still claim to judge any project by its perceived merit in the theatrical arena, not on video.

Stephen Diener, former chairman of Media and original executive producer of the *Elm*

## ...THE ART OF THE DEAL

Continued from page 34

authorized to sell Sony products will go to another dealer and buy one to *nail* to his floor. Then he'll bad-mouth the item and rig a comparison so you'll buy something he *does* want to sell—even if it's inferior.

Fortunately, we didn't encounter any such problems. But, if you suspect that somebody's dealing you marked cards, here's what to look for. A common ploy is to sneak different prerecorded tapes into the decks you're comparing. Some stores

deck is really the same as the deck that you want, then you're being steered—and prepare for evasive maneuvers.

A final word about the final part of any deal: clinching the price. VR's budget didn't allow for any purchasing on this assignment, but we did discover two phrases that could shave a few percentage points off the sticker price. The first, said simply, is, "Is this the best price you can offer?" The second, "Could we work out some kind of deal with . . ." allows you a bit more room. You can fill in the space with blank tapes,

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**...VIDEO HOLLYWOOD**

Continued from page 29

of 1986, followed a frank analysis of the existing market, which convinced Vestron execs that they'd have to make their own hit movies if they wanted top tape titles. Amazingly, Vestron Pictures hit the jackpot first off with *Dirty Dancing*, a sleeper hit at the boxoffice that carried its winning ways over to other areas: To date, the movie's two soundtrack albums have brought in over \$20 million, and *Dirty Dancing* T-shirts, posters, lunch pails and other products still sell like hot cakes today, nearly two years

ing their emphasis toward upscale movies. For example, Trans World Entertainment, a B-movie powerhouse, recently moved into classic company with the theatrical release of *Full Moon in Blue Water*, starring Gene Hackman and Teri Garr.

But, aside from the boom—and now the bust—in B movies, what impact is video having on more mainstream pictures? Are the movies we watch on video being made differently in consideration of home viewers? The answers are mixed.

Sherry Lansing, former production head at 20th Century-Fox and now a successful

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In most areas creative input by video investors is limited, if offered at all. Matters of script and casting approval, preproduction and postproduction are still left up to the moviemakers themselves. (An exception to this rule is Media Home Entertainment, which exercises some creative control over the *Nightmare* movies.) And, oddly enough, producers still claim to judge any project by its perceived merit in the theatrical arena, not on video.

Stephen Diener, former chairman of Media and original executive producer of the *Elm Street* series, sums it up by saying: "The biggest hits are the biggest theatrical hits. Anybody who's making a movie for theatrical release aims to please that market first." There's no doubt that the public's acceptance of home video has shaken up (and shaken apart) the movie industry, just as broadcast television did 40 years ago. But now the pieces are falling into place, and new strategies for the mutual benefit of both mediums evolve practically every day. It remains only for the consumer to determine what the future will bring; the movie business is a cyclical one, and shifting viewer preferences invariably alter the style and content of the movies we see. The motion picture industry and its offshoots have proven surprisingly adaptable to these shifts, and that continuing adaptability is about the *only* thing that can be counted on in the years ahead. □

## ...THE ART OF THE DEAL

Continued from page 34

authorized to sell Sony products will go to another dealer and buy one to *naïl* to his floor. Then he'll bad-mouth the item and rig a comparison so you'll buy something he *does* want to sell—even if it's inferior.

Fortunately, we didn't encounter any such problems. But, if you suspect that somebody's dealing you marked cards, here's what to look for. A common ploy is to sneak different prerecorded tapes into the decks you're comparing. Some stores add 30 to 50 feet of cable between the VCR and monitor to degrade the picture. Another trick is to add a 10 dB attenuator to a VCR antenna input. If you're seeing a bad picture from a deck you think is a quality item, check to make sure none of those tricks is being used.

Another tactic you should be aware of is what's known as "inventory management." This means that salespeople sell what they have in stock and push what they have too much of. So if you're a salesperson on commission, you'll stock and try to sell the deck that brings you the greatest return. On the sales floor, this manifests itself as steering. If the salesperson a) tells you that *this* deck is much better than the one you had in mind, or b) insists that you'll soon wish you'd opted for *this* deck, or c) assures you that *this*

deck is really the same as the deck that you want, then you're being steered—and prepare for evasive maneuvers.

A final word about the final part of any deal: clinching the price. *VCR's* budget didn't allow for any purchasing on this assignment, but we did discover two phrases that could shave a few percentage points off the sticker price. The first, said simply, is, "Is this the best price you can offer?" The second, "Could we work out some kind of deal with . . ." allows you a bit more room. You can fill in the space with blank tapes, a TV set or anything else, since salespeople get more eager to deal as the value of your intended purchase goes up. Also, plan to combine a few major purchases in one deal.

Still, as we said at the outset, the most important thing you can do before you get to the store is know what you're looking for: Have an idea of the features you want and a couple of models that have them. It's nice, of course, to see the decks in operation. If possible, play with the remote, try to set the timer and ask the salesperson to leave you alone with the deck for some experiments. That's why we endorse the more expensive connoisseur outlets and not discounters. But even there, you should have an idea what you're looking for before you start asking questions. In short, before you deal for that VCR, make sure that you've loaded the deck—in your favor. □

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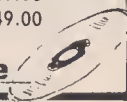
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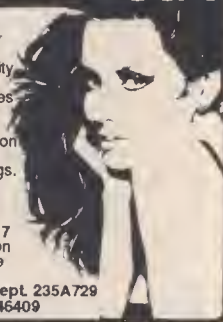
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## ...COMPUTERS

*Continued from page 43*

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### System Highlights

While one might assume that dollars translate into sophistication, that isn't necessarily true. Generally speaking, all three of these PC-based systems will create outstanding computer graphics, akin to what was available only from mainframes less than three years ago.

The Mac's advantage is its overall ease of use. Its graphics-driven operating system is superb. The II is fast with its 68020 processor; the IIX is faster still with its 68030. These machines are also the most expensive. Why? For this reason: Apple isn't plagued by body snatchers (clones) the way IBM is. Nevertheless, for desktop publishing, computer-aided design and such, the Mac is unarguably the system of choice.

While the peripherals for the IBM and its clones cost about the same as the Mac's, and offer similar features, the base system is considerably less expensive. An IBM clone with an 80286 processor, a fast hard drive, an EGA monitor and some other features should cost less than \$3,000. A similarly equipped Mac II would cost nearly \$8,000.

IBM compatibles seemingly have cornered much of the commercial graphics-imaging market. As an all-around machine to provide sophisticated graphics and perform routine office functions, IBM enjoys a considerable cachet.

For primarily graphics-only applications, the Amiga demands serious consideration. At about \$2,500 for the full-blown 2000, it's intrinsically better suited for graphics than the IBM clones. For those just getting started, the 500 (\$799) offers simple graphics that can be laid on the tape or superimposed over live footage. More demanding users may find that they quickly use up the 500's limited memory.

Nonetheless, the Amiga is a maverick and also the new kid on the block. It presently offers far less general-purpose and graphics software than its more established competitors. But what is available is good and is very reasonably priced. (Atari's ST line has recently made inroads into the low-cost desktop video market as well.)

As we said at the beginning, there's a lot more to computers and video than we've covered here. The animation and audio possibilities offered by the computer/camcorder interface are particularly intriguing, and they'll be treated in future articles. But what's here ought to convince you that your home computer and your home video gear will make an excellent match. ☐

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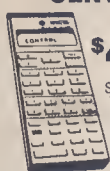
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